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THE BLACK CARDINAL

CHAPTER I.

THE CONSUL AND THE CARDINAL.

IN June of the year 1801 the chief characters of this story were not farther apart in distance than in mind. As their fates were one day to be mingled for a brief time, speculation as to their doings on this particular date becomes interesting. When we love, we become curious about the history of our beloved. When a man becomes famous, we hark back to his cradle and the log-cabin. It is a pleasure to follow the path of the years, by which a great soul arrived at fame; or a lovely woman came to her heart's desire; or a wretch to his doom. Thus, at the beginning of June, 1801, dear Betsy Patterson had fluttered from school like a butterfly to brighten her home in the grave and sedate city of Baltimore; Jerome Bonaparte had left the naval school for a visit to Napoleon's court at Paris; the Marquis Andrea Consalvi had returned from college to pass the vacation with his relatives in Rome; his brother the Cardinal was deep in the affairs of the papal state, as first minister to the Pope; and Napoleon, the First Consul, had set

on foot the great intrigue which should make him Emperor of the French. Each moved content in his own orbit, never dreaming how soon their pathways would cross, run parallel for years amid many trials, and then swing off into the obscurity from which they came.

Suddenly the indifference of all these people was changed by events, and, as if called from the heavens, they raised their eyes to look in the same direction. Cardinal Consalvi one day found it necessary to travel to Paris for a long negotiation with Napoleon. Men were shocked at the notion of a prime minister setting out as envoy extraordinary, leaving home affairs to a subordinate; but in dealing with the First Consul diplomats had early learned to drop precedent. In diplomacy as in war the young general was smashing all records. Austria had sent her prime minister to deal with him directly in Paris. Consalvi decided that he could do as well, little as he cared for the enterprise. He was helped to this decision by Napoleon's order that the French ambassador should leave Rome at once. The Cardinal and the envoy departed together, that all the world might see how friendly were their respective sovereigns; and with them went the Marquis Andrea, the second to feel the impulse of destiny. He travelled as the companion and secretary of his brother, with his thoughts on that brilliant general who ruled in France, and who threatened to rule the world.

When the Cardinal arrived in Paris, after a stiff journey of two weeks overland from Rome, he delayed a single night before informing Napoleon of his

presence in the city, and his readiness for an interview. Wearied, as he had right to be after a forced journey, His Eminence counted on a full day's rest before taking up the arduous enterprise which had hurried him from home; he might even get a week's leisure; his note might be overlooked for a week in the excitement of a hunt at Versailles; since cardinals were trifles to a young general whose schemes, like his achievements, filled monarchs with anxiety. For the sake of a rest and preparation Consalvi was willing to be overlooked. His mission was a forlorn hope, the task desperate, the reward disgrace perhaps. What matter then if the First Consul of France slighted the First Minister of Rome? His Eminence lingered over the fragrant coffee that morning, politely listening to the sad story of the prelates of the household, and studying at odd moments the facade of an old building across the street. He knew the story by heart. These men had failed, and he had come to mend their failure, or make a worse. Had they not been humble and the case desperate, his presence would hardly have been an honor to them.

After coffee the Cardinal withdrew to his room and his brother's society for a short recreation. He was fond of his brother, a dark-haired, soft-eyed youth of fifteen, burning now with the desire to see and speak with the hero of the world; and after to see the city of the Terror, where mobs had ruled and men had dared to slay a king. He began to discuss the tour about Paris, when a messenger arrived in hot haste from Napoleon: the First Consul would be pleased to receive His Eminence at two that after-

noon, and to see him in his robes as cardinal. Consalvi dismissed the messenger with word that he would expect the master of ceremonies at the palace in time to conduct him to the audience. The extreme promptness of Napoleon nettled him, since it proved his own surmise that he was to receive small consideration. Tempted at first to decline on the plea of indisposition, he reflected that the chief beneficiary in this matter should not complain of over-promptness on the part of the benefactor.

"And what does he mean by your robes as cardinal?" asked Andrea.

"I asked him how I should dress," answered His Eminence. "In this unhappy country the clergy no longer wear the clerical dress in public. They dress like other citizens. It might not do for me to appear at the palace in full costume. It might offend public sentiment."

"Yet here is a command, Eminence?"

"It need not be noticed," said the Cardinal thoughtfully. "I cannot explain it. Is Bonaparte so much the master that he cares little about giving this sort of offence? Anyhow, it is not according to etiquette that I should appear *en cardinal* at any court except my own, and then only in the presence of the Pope."

"You will then wear your civilian's dress, Eminence?"

"I think it will suit the occasion."

"And you will take me along with you to the palace, brother?"

"Ah, fox," said Consalvi, shaking a finger at him. "You still burn to see the conqueror of Italy!"

"He is the wonder of the world," answered Andrea, putting his arms about the Cardinal lovingly. "Can you blame me for wanting to see him?"

"No, since you too are overcome with the lust of military glory, my brother dear. You shall see him, if at the same time you agree to reflect on the meanness of that passion which glorifies Napoleon in the eyes of men. A Francis of Assisi is worth ten Bonapartes."

"I agree, Eminence," said Andrea filled with joy. "Ah, if I were like you, to speak with him, I should tremble till I fell. Are you not afraid, dear brother, of what may happen this afternoon?"

"Who should make me fear? Napoleon Bonaparte? Were he ten times greater he is at most a man. His court? They are less than he, a clever mob, mad with the lust of power, pleasure, money, and place, the bloody spawn of the Terror, wild beasts who have just found a master. Most of them could be bought for a fair price. How could I fear them? My only dread is for my cause, which may suffer through my blunders. Ah, yes, I fear for that. You must pray for me, Andrea, that I do not fail. The prayers of the innocent are strong with God. Now, send me Giovanni to help me dress, and prepare yourself for your visit to the palace."

Precisely at half past one the master of ceremonies was announced, and a moment later His Eminence and Andrea descended the stairs to meet him in the presence of the household. A very distinguished figure Consalvi made in his old-fashioned coat of black velvet, with waistcoat and knee-breeches of the same

rich material, buckled shoes, stockings of red silk, and a collar of the same color encircling his shoulders. His dark hair was partly concealed by a red beretta. His serene and kindly face showed no anxiety or haste. His manner had that dignity which one would expect of the Pope's first minister. Andrea followed him with loving and reverent eyes, and the prelates of the household felt their anxiety relieved at the sight of his calmness and confidence.

The master of ceremonies conducted the Cardinal to the carriage, and did his best to explain the sights; but the most remarkable thing to be seen in the city that day was the carriage and its chief occupant. Consalvi was deeply touched by those quiet streets, once noisy with murder and crimson with blood. The storm had passed surely, for he himself bore witness to the fact. Only a few years back and this peaceful ride to the palace would have become a horrible march to the guillotine, with himself and his innocent brother as the victims, this master of ceremonies as the executioner. What frightful suffering had these streets, these houses witnessed; and here they stood now, placid and drowsy, while the hearts that anguish and calamity had devoured slept in bloody graves! The world would never be the same again, never quite the same. The sadness of the thought was lightened by another thought: the Church was rising above the ruins of the old order, and bravely facing the insolence of the new. That was her destiny. It consoled him to take part in the new order of things.

He thought little or nothing of his coming interview with the First Consul, since thinking seemed

profitless. He knew not what adventures awaited him in the palace, and he could foresee nothing; supposing that, as became the simplicity of a republic, he would be led to the private office of Bonaparte, and would arrange in a quiet conversation for the work that had to be done. There seemed to be considerable bustle in the palace when they alighted and passed into a lofty chamber off the main entrance. In this room was a young gentleman in the uniform of a naval cadet, who stared at the party with great curiosity. The master of ceremonies received a bow from him, which he acknowledged with profound respect; and at a sign from the lad he made bold to introduce him to the Consalvis.

“Monsieur Jerome, the youngest brother of the First Consul.”

The Cardinal did not appear impressed by this statement, but he gracefully acknowledged the boy's presence. He thought he recognized the type; handsome face without character and without innocence, a secret insolence in the bearing, a particular contempt for the ecclesiastic, a harshness of precocity which took away the sweet verdancy of youth; the revolution had robbed youth of its purity, the young men had become insufferable. But Jerome was good-natured, and his faults lay lightly on the surface.

“And you are a cardinal?” he said, looking without a blush straight into the face of Consalvi. “Often my mother told me of the cardinals of her time, and of their red robes. There are not many in France to-day I can tell you. And is this a little cardinal?”

He turned to Andrea who regarded him as placidly

as did his brother, with fire in his eye perhaps. The master of ceremonies interfered.

"The Marquis Consalvi," he said, "brother to the Cardinal."

"Ah, brother of the Cardinal," said Jerome lightly, "accept the esteem of the brother of the First Consul. If you will do me the honor, while His Eminence deals with His Excellency, I shall be pleased to show you the palace, and to hear your opinion of Paris."

"A very good arrangement," said the Cardinal suavely. "The Marquis is eager to pay his respects to the First Consul, but a glance at this distinguished man must satisfy him to-day. Perhaps you might secure him so great a pleasure."

"Easily, Eminence," said Jerome, "and maybe a word or two from him. I get a lecture from him at least once a day, which I could well spare. Come with me, Marquis. With your permission, Eminence."

The lads bowed to the Cardinal and left the room. The master of ceremonies had already taken his leave without explanation. The diplomat, left like a pilot in the fog of a strange ocean, helpless, and miserable, wondered at the ways of republican courts. Was not this task sufficiently difficult without adding this mystery of procedure? However, he retained his calmness until a gentleman of the ushers came to the rescue, and carried him off with him . . . to the private rooms of the First Consul? Not at all. The first door which the usher opened led into a grand corridor from which ascended the staircase to the reception-rooms; and in this corridor and on the staircase had assembled, it seemed to the astonished diplo-

mat, the entire world of official France; men and women in splendid court costumes, coming and going, grouped in corners, chatting, planning, sneering, criticising, in the way of the world.

The gentleman usher knew that he had a sensation on his hands and enjoyed it. The multitude paused a moment in the greatest astonishment at sight of this dignified figure approaching, without embarrassment, and passing through the mob of all that was successful in France that day. His cold eye surveyed them without insolence and without respect, these mushrooms of the Terror, whose splendor smelled rankly of the guillotine, from whose bloody dew they were nourished. A few in the throng recalled the last cardinal who had smilingly climbed that staircase to an audience with Louis XVI or with lovely Marie Antoinette. Some swallowed remorseful tears. Many sneered. To the majority he was an apparition, the shade of that Church which had passed away forever, and which now rose suddenly from its bloody grave to ask for justice, and to exact it.

Consalvi was shocked, to say the least, but he kept his nerve until the long march through the glittering multitude ended in a quiet ante-chamber, and Talleyrand himself made him welcome. He did not know the clever and crafty ex-prelate except by reputation. Talleyrand said not a word, but pointed to a door which led into the next apartment, threw it open, and allowed the Cardinal to precede him. Consalvi had just said to himself, this is the cabinet of the First Consul, and at last this farce will be over, when the thought died away in his mind, and left him almost

gasping at the gorgeous scene before him. An immense chamber stretched away before him; at the far end was grouped part of that splendid throng which he had encountered in the corridors; nearer himself stood the three consuls who governed France; Bonaparte ruled the other two completely; it was not a parallel to the first triumvirate, for Lepidus and Antony have a place in history; thus Bonaparte ruled France.

The First Consul stepped from his place to greet the Cardinal, and all the world stared. To them also the noble figure in black velvet and scarlet was an apparition, unwelcome as if Louis XVII had entered the hall. Napoleon seemed to care little for their scowls and dark whisperings. Talleyrand introduced His Eminence and withdrew to a distance. The Cardinal might have been angered, had he the time; but there was not time even to reflect, as did Talleyrand in the background, that the Church and the World faced each other once more in the everlasting battle of the flesh with the spirit, the world with the man. The diplomat had a smooth sentence of good will ready, but Napoleon in a dry tone, without roughness or affability, took the word from his mouth.

"I know the motive of your visit to France," said he. "I wish the work to open at once. I give you five days for it. I warn you that if at the close of the fifth day the negotiations are not ended, you must return to Rome. On my part I have prepared for that outcome."

Consalvi did not hesitate an instant in his reply. He had glanced once at the array of officials, and now

he looked calmly into the pale face of the young soldier whose genius did not find its proper support in his experience. The remark of Bonaparte had shown his limitations. Very young he must be to imagine that work of the kind mentioned could be accomplished in a given time, short or long. He had addressed Consalvi as if they had known each other for years. In the same tone and with the same expression, the Cardinal made his reply.

"In sending his principal minister to Paris as his envoy," said Consalvi, "His Holiness has given clear proof of his desire to conclude a treaty with the French government. I flatter myself with the hope of arranging the entire matter in the space of time that you wish."

The tone, the slight emphasis on the last words, the calm glance at the multitude, the noble figure, which like a magician Napoleon had sprung upon his familiars, a hundred little items of sentiment and policy, had their effect on the young Consul. Greatness can feel the presence of greatness. Napoleon recognized before him a temper in its way as fine as his own. And he became affable and confidential, talking away for half an hour, without rancor or impatience, of the conditions, of the difficulties, of his wishes about the treaty, and of his good will to the enterprise; while the crowd grew impatient, and wondered, and admired the cleric in black and scarlet, who could hold the attention of the First Consul, and endure the stare of a callous mob like an iceberg.

At last the audience ended abruptly. Bonaparte bowed, having said his last word, the Cardinal re-

turned the bow, and Talleyrand came forward. As Napoleon turned to resume his place between his colleagues, his eyes caught sight of a door not far from him, partially covered by a curtain. This door had opened and closed, and two young men had concealed themselves behind the curtain, from a hole in which they were now studying the hero.

"Come out, Jerome," said Napoleon half in anger. "What business have you there, and with a stranger?"

"I am incognito," replied Jerome, "and I am entertaining with the sight of your Excellency, a friend, and a great admirer of yours, the Marquis Consalvi of Rome."

"Ah, indeed! Bring my admirer and your friend forward, sir."

The Cardinal and Talleyrand paused, while the two lads left their hiding-place, Andrea blushing and horrified at consequences, and stood before the consul.

"A relative of the Cardinal's?" said Napoleon graciously.

"My brother," answered Consalvi, "very much dazzled by your glory, and long persuaded that it would be bliss to see and hear you."

"My dear child," said Napoleon, clasping Andrea's hand and then kissing his cheek, "may you be happy in getting your wish. Such admiration as yours is very sweet, since it is without a guile."

"Ah, that I might get my wish as easily," sighed Jerome.

"You have it, scapegrace," said his brother. "Your commission is made out, and you sail with your ship for the West Indies."

He turned away then, and all withdrew. Jerome, almost beside himself with happiness, accompanied the Consalvis to the carriage.

"Your Eminence brought me luck," said he in farewell. "I am sorry that I shall not be in Paris to entertain your brother, and to show my gratitude. But if we ever meet again. . . ."

The carriage drove off, and Jerome flew to his ship, the ship that carried him, not to war, but to love; to the West Indies indeed, which had no part in his life, but also to Baltimore, where lovely Betsy Patterson awaited him. Even then that sprightly young woman dreamed of him, not in the guise of a naval officer, with the distinguished name of Bonaparte, but as the prince of the fairy story, who must appear some day to marry lovely girls.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST LOVE IS FOOL-LOVE.

THE ship sailed up and down and all around, as is the custom with war-ships in times of peace; and Jerome was long in getting within hailing-distance of Betsy. When war came, the little ship flew away from the dangerous seas to the shelter of the New York harbor, as the little fish flies from the big fish. The French sloop could not face the British frigates. The gallant sailors went ashore and Jerome fluttered like a butterfly from one city to another, from one hospitable mansion to another, proud of his resemblance to his famous brother, making love with more readiness than tact, yet forgiven sincerely as often as he offended, because he was so good-natured, so deeply in love with the western country. His name and his face opened every door to him, no less than the prospect which lay before him; for it was already whispered that the First Consul of France would seize the crown rather than lend his sword to the support of the Bourbons. Little cared Jerome for his brother's schemes, or for crowns, or for the future. He had a good heart, if a foolish head and a weak will. He loved freedom, and travel, and women, and wine. If he shed an occasional tear over his mother's fond letters, for his conduct had already covered acres with

wild oats, the tears made him feel virtuous again. He did not improve. Life is long, and age affords the leisure and the mood for repentance and atonement.

He fell in love each day, and would have proposed once a week, but that his love did not last seven days. Only in the case of Miss Manners was he so deeply smitten on Sunday as to be still in love with her on the following Saturday; and he would infallibly have proposed to her the next evening had he not learned of her departure for home the same morning. A month of this sort of experience warned him of his inconstant nature, and made him sad; but his sadness vanished when he observed the speed and ease with which he fell in love and out of it again and again. America seemed teeming with lovely and adorable women, until his heart ached with the embarrassment of choosing. He longed for that day when the queen of his heart and his destiny would rise in her supernal beauty to eclipse all rivals, and make adoration easy and everlasting.

This happiness gripped him, he thought, one soft September afternoon, as he sat among the gentry of Baltimore watching the Fall races. The green distance all around lay under a veil of purple haze, the sun was in the West, and just overhead the sky showed blue, fading away then into silver gray. Perhaps once a month Jerome escaped from the charms of earth to look at the sky for an instant. As he saw this blue canopy, he felt that the queen of his heart and his destiny ought to drop from it, and as he lowered his gaze to earth, following her dainty flight from heaven in his fancy, he saw her sitting just

opposite. Her dark eyes met his, and love leaped from them into his heart. He recognized the delicious thrill, and also its new element. A sense of humility bowed him to the ground. His eyes closed for a moment, and he feared their next glance would find her gone.

What he saw was Miss Elisabeth Patterson, who had certainly dropped from the skies, trailing much of their beauty along with her, but not that afternoon. Eighteen years previous her arrival had been properly announced in Baltimore, to which she had added a screeching announcement of her own, when they baptized her in the parish church. Her loveliness and charm made the Lieutenant gasp with pleasure. Dainty as a flower, with dark, tender eyes, lustrous brown hair, plump and graceful form clad in bewitching colors, her expression vivacious, her movements sprightly, never, never, anywhere, had he seen woman so lovely. As he was nearly nineteen, and had traveled two years in the West Indies, his wide and varied experience made him a good judge.

What Miss Patterson saw at the same moment is worth the telling. Her eyes had followed the distinguished guest from his appearance on the ground. Had not Dolly Manners described him over and over on her return home from a visit to Philadelphia, with all the sweet details of a week's devotion? When for a moment Jerome looked up at the blue sky, Miss Patterson looked up also, and caught his pensive glance as it lighted once more on earth. A thrill shivered through her at the piercing stroke of his look. Never, never, anywhere, had she seen in one man so many charming features, such distinction, grace, gayety.

And behind him lay the grand horizon of his brother's fame. He would return to a court, mingle with the greatest of the old world, eat and drink with princes, forgetful of stuffy, backwoods Baltimore.

Miss Manners introduced them after a time, and chided them both for their apparent indifference. He felt the touch of her little hand, and succumbed to that humility which had silenced him at the first. She ventured to look into his eyes a moment, curious to feel again the force of his look. They separated with conventional remarks, which the chiding of Miss Manners failed to warm into something more friendly. Both felt a sense of pain and disappointment.

"You were altogether too chilling, dearest," said Dolly afterwards on the way home. "I could see you impressed him, but your manner checked all advances. And he's perfectly safe, you know."

"Perfectly safe! What ever do you mean, Dolly?"

"No fear of complications," answered Dolly. "He may not marry except by his brother's permission, and then it must be to a member of the nobility, perhaps a princess."

Happy princess, thought poor Betsy, feeling the tears in her eyes. She knew not why she wept, why she fell silent during her friend Dolly's chatter, why she had no sympathy with the pretty story of Jerome's devotion for a whole week to Miss Manners.

"Oh, he makes love beautifully," said Dolly with enthusiasm. "Do give him the chance, dearest, to make love to you. The prettiest speeches, la, I blush now to think of them, they were so sweet, and so soft. And his eyes do express such adoration. And longing

also. Why, my love, you would swear he meant it. I got quite dizzy towards the end of the week."

Had Miss Manners only known how near the office of queen of his heart and destiny had come to her doors! Betsy listened like one in a dream, for her fancy pictured Jerome lavishing a week's adoration on her humble self, with a conclusion more solemn and becoming, the exchange of vows, the wedding-bells, and the vision of long years stretching away like a corridor, down which she walked at his side among princes! How could Dolly talk of her sweet intimacy with such greatness in terms so flippant? She found that the whole world talked of him in the same fashion. At breakfast her father and brother and aunt discussed him as if he were a mere neighbor.

"Nice-looking boy," said Mr. Patterson judicially, "but badly brought up. And I should say weak-willed, easily led, very impressionable."

"They say he's made love to every woman he met since he came ashore," Robert added. "I know he has begun to do it with the Baltimore people. So look out, Betsy. He's got the French polish and glitter, egad."

"He's perfectly safe," Aunt Hester remarked. "When he marries it must be to something very lofty at home, and if his brother becomes King you may be sure he'll look at nothing lower than a princess of the blood."

"Who would have thought it, such an upstart, to get so high?" said Mr. Patterson. "I really do not know what the world is coming to!"

"What did you think of him, Betsy?" said Robert teasingly.

"Just too lovely for anything! So different from the tame things called men in this city, you know. Anyone could see his distinction, and his fine feelings, and his lofty mind."

Brother and sister teased each other in this fashion. But Betsy grieved secretly over the flippancy with which her hero was treated in the common conversation. As a guest he received the utmost consideration, the men found him a good fellow for a Frenchman, and the women loved him and petted him. She alone venerated him, and he saw adoration in her eyes. Quietly and without attracting attention he singled her out for unobtrusive but emphatic favors; delightful moments of privacy with the music of the ballroom and the murmur of the dancers soft in the ear; or, a brief walk through the shady avenue of a garden, where for a moment the mask might be thrown aside. Without words they came to an understanding, he with his glances, she with her blushes. It was without surprise, though the blood rushed to her heart at the eloquent phrase, that she heard him murmur one delightful moment: "I love you."

After that anything could happen, and therefore did happen. He could hardly believe in his own bliss, nor she in her splendid opportunity. Love opened to her that wonderful world of which she had read and dreamed all her sweet childhood and youth; the fairy-land of Europe, peopled by nobles, princes, and kings; in which she was now to walk forever, a true fairy princess, lifted by his love from the 'pumpkin to the

royal chariot. Ah, what days of rapture, and what nights of golden dreams! They found their happy climax when the lover clasped her in his arms, and whispered, you are mine forever!

For the first time in his experience Jerome had played Romeo for three long weeks, and he needed no other proof to assure him of profound affection. He did not seek proof, forgetting the warnings of his brother, of his superior officers who watched over him, all the difficulties bound to arise from this union. He loved and was not that enough? What cared he for ambition? And indeed he had little regard for place and power, so long as he had pleasure. Love made him shrewd enough to conceal his passion from his friends, and to keep up the appearance of gallantry which had so amused the world. No one in Baltimore, least of all Dolly Manners, suspected him until the last moment. Careful Aunt Hester worried much over the behavior of her dearest Betsy, and made various inquiries before speaking to Mr. Patterson.

"I cannot make her out these days," she said to Miss Manners. "It isn't possible that Lieutenant Bonaparte. . . ."

"Oh, la, Aunt Hester, with such a light-o'-love! He has treated us all with most extreme devotion. How he gets time for so much of it is beyond me. And I must say that Betsy has chilled him by her shyness. He just looks at her, and she almost freezes. No Frenchman can endure that."

"It may be the Fall fever," Aunt Hester admitted, and pretended to let the matter drop; but secretly she informed the father, and Betsy was summoned to

give an account of herself. Imagine his surprise at her answer, when he said gaily:

"Here, minx, why do you set your good aunt to worrying? Is this young Bonaparte to make a conquest at last, and in my family?"

And she replied sweetly:

"Papa, he is coming to see you this evening, and, oh, be kind to him, for I love him with all my heart, and I must die if you send him away."

Then she fled in tears to her room and Robert Patterson sat there stunned with horror and other feelings; so many in fact that he failed to disentangle them, and fixed his mind on that happy moment when he should send the Lieutenant packing, and put an end to all feeling with one solid solemn word. Betsy saw the word in his astonished eye as she made her answer, and sent hurried information to Jerome, warned him in the hall when he made his appearance after dark, and sat trembling and weeping at the head of the stairs, straining her ears for the sounds of the interview. Evidently it required as many words as could be said with heat in half an hour to impress on the Lieutenant the sincerity of Mr. Patterson's vigorous negative. From the parlor she heard the study-door open, and the cold but courteous good-night of her father. The butler showed the young man to the door, and closed it firmly, but Jerome was in the parlor then, telling in whispers his mournful story.

"What did he say, oh, what did he say, love?"

"A bitter word every minute," Jerome answered laughing, "and at the end of each, no. It was like a litany."

"Oh, tell me all that was said, dearest."

"His daughter would never marry a Catholic, no! Even if I became a Protestant for her sake? No! We were too young. What if I should wait? No! His daughter must remain in America. Well, if I should also remain in this charming and wonderful country? No! The First Consul of France, would certainly seek to annul the marriage, and he would not subject his daughter to such mischance. Well, what if I defy the First Consul by remaining in America out of his reach? No! And at last there came a final negative which hurt me to the soul. I would not believe it of any man, least of all your estimable father, dearest and sweetest."

"Oh, tell me, tell me," she gasped in anguish.

"I told him how I loved you, how you were become part of me, how it would be death to live without you, and I assured him that you were my first love, that no other had ever touched my heart, that I did not know what love was until I had seen you. What do you think this wretched man said?"

"Oh, tell me, tell me," in accents of horror.

"Young man, first love is fool-love."

After that there was a long and woful silence in the room.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE LAUGHS AT DISTANCE.

THIS silence had invaded the entire mansion by the next night, for lovely Betsy was gone! Gone, bag and baggage to friends far away in Virginia, where the breath of the wilderness might absorb the germs of love's miasma. She made no objection and no scene, for the children of that household knew the father's will to be as firm as the father's love. Before breakfast the surprised and irritated father invited her to his room. Aunt Hester kissed her in silence, proud that her little darling had won the love of the French prince-to-be, but convinced that the union was impossible; and Robert, quite as delighted at his sister's cleverness and success, pressed her hand at the bottom of the stairs, and whispered:

"Take things easy, but give Bonaparte up. You're splendid, but the finest jockey would lose on your odds."

From these incidents she learned that a family council had already been held, and sentence had been pronounced against her lover. She had the sympathy of aunt and brother. In her father's face, however, she saw only sadness without the sympathy. The passing devotion of the Lieutenant and the demand for the hand of his daughter had not flattered Robert Patter-

son, who knew the goatish disposition of princes and the secret ways of courts. His sadness arose from Betsy's bad beginning in the thorny path of life. It might darken her life forever, if something were not done, and he had planned exile among charming friends as the surest and quickest remedy.

"My dear," said he, as he kissed her gently, "I dismissed the young Lieutenant forever in very plain language. You must never see him again. And in order to help you to forget the foolishness of the past weeks, you are to set out before noon for your cousin Herrick's. A month in the sweet country air will tone up your nerves and clear your mind."

What could she do but weep and protest her intention to die if this separation were to be eternal! And her only answer to his persuasions, commands, and arguments was:

"Papa, I love him."

"It is a love that means misery for you, Elisabeth. This young man may marry you, but his brother will break that marriage and hale him home to marry a royal princess. What a pretty picture you would make as a deserted wife, with your husband probably occupying some throne on the strength of his marriage with a princess."

"He loves me, he would not desert me," whimpered she.

"If love would tie him to you so that the enchantment would hinder desertion absolutely, I might not object," said the father. "But alas! love has no such consequence. Can you not see, my pet, all the difficulties, the dangers, the risks, the sorrows that threaten

the woman who weds this young man without the consent of his brother?"

"I love him and he loves me," she answered.

"Then the only cure is for you to cease loving him before he forgets you," said Robert Patterson. "I forbid you to meet him again, or to correspond with him. You shall never marry him, Elisabeth. Think of that and try to enjoy your visit to cousin Herrick."

Betsy, as a girl of spirit and intelligence, accepted her fate with dignity. Seeing in the faces of her relatives the reflection of her father's opinions and resolution with regard to herself and Jerome, she wasted no time in tears or arguments, but helped with the packing, sent a special invitation to Dolly Manners to be her companion, and was ready at ten o'clock for the carriage. Robert, full of sympathy, whispered to her often:

"It's no use, little girl. He's not the man to make you happy. The father is treating you the best possible."

"I love him and he loves me," was all she could say.

Robert accompanied the young ladies a half an hour out of the city, and then bade them farewell. It would have been to his advantage had he continued with them another half-hour, not only to hear the conversation of Dolly Manners with her friend, but to see its abrupt and pleasant termination when Lieutenant Bonaparte dashed out of a bridle path in the autumn woods, and drew rein at the carriage door.

"Oh, I felt it, . . . I knew it," gasped Miss Manners as the full truth flashed on her mind. She sat

there, divided between envy, interest and green jealousy, while the Lieutenant, who was the soul of discretion at times, chatted with admirable politeness over his regret at this sudden departure from the city, and looked all the time as if his eyes would fly out of his head and attach themselves like jewels to the forehead of Betsy. For ten minutes Miss Manners listened to this conversation in a hostile attitude, which the lovers could feel but not define. It kept them discreet, however. Dolly reviewed the past three weeks with rage, and compared them with that perfectly silly but beautiful week of hers at Philadelphia. Why, she and the rest of the observing women in town had been blind, utterly blind, tricked and fooled like mere babes by this smooth hussy and the reckless Lieutenant. Incredible! They were engaged! Not a word had been said, but the truth stood clear. Betsy had been banished because the Lieutenant had asked her hand in marriage! Dolly's head spun round for one minute. This girl stood on the verge of greatness, she might become a princess, a queen, an empress; and leave her present life and her present friends so far below her that vision itself could not span the distance! Tears filled her eyes, and at the same moment cleared her mind. If one could not be the princess, at least there was a distinction and consolation in holding the place of confidant to royalty. She beamed suddenly upon the lovers.

"Well, Mistress Elisabeth, shall I go pick a posy in the woods for you two, while you chat?" said she with assumed archness.

"Thank you, dear," murmured Betsy.

"Very kind of you to suggest it," said the Lieutenant.

"But jist the same it's altogether out of ordher," boomed from the coachman's seat, and old Mark leaned from his decorous position to look at Lieutenant Bonaparte and be better heard by the ladies.

"The instructions are to keep the young ladies in full view till I plant them at Herrick's, d'ye mind? Ye may talk as ye ride, just as ye are, but beyond that, look out for my ordhers."

"Oh, Mark," whimpered the girls together.

"I know it's hard, but I'm not to be moved from me ordhers," said the old man severely. "However, an' if Miss Manners would like to ride up here with me, and the Lieutenant would like to hitch his horse and ride inside, me ordhers are not to the conthrairy."

To this sly bridge over a difficulty Miss Manners offered so flat an objection with her eyes that Betsy had to refuse the inviting offer, and the Lieutenant rode on by the slow-going coach, discussing the outcome of their present trouble. Precocity in most things was Jerome's distinguishing trait, a man in everything but judgment and self-control. He thought only of displaying himself like a peacock, and half his parade beside the carriage was intended for Miss Manners and the coachman. He knew the drift of this entire proceeding, he said; separation would chill his love and dull her desire; soon he would have to return to the sea, and she would be urged to marry some home-bred gallant; her father counted on a month or two for nature to evaporate the love of eternity.

"I shall love you forever . . . till death . . . through all eternity."

Old Mark laughed in silence, but the girls shivered with delight, to which Miss Manners added a little envy at this fervent declaration. It was superb under the circumstances; the lovely road lined with the perfumed woods, and the dashing cavalier astride his fretting steed; the rich voice speaking the fiery words almost with rage; devotion glowing in the two faces more brightly than the glowing October sun!

"Till death!" Dolly Manners said to herself cynically. "It takes a pretty strong fire to keep up heat in the heart that long."

Yet she knew at the moment that if the burning phrase had been uttered for her she would have believed. Ah, that week in Philadelphia! Had he not spoken words of the same sound? Precisely, but not alas! not in the same way, with burning eyes and vibrant, soul-melting tones.

At last the lovers had to part, and Mark gave the signal by stopping the carriage and shaking his head humorously at the Lieutenant, who pressed the hands of Miss Manners lightly, and kissed the little white fingers of Betsy.

"Be faithful," he said firmly.

"Be true," whimpered Betsy, handkerchief to her eyes.

He saluted, turned his horse resolutely, and flew down the road. Faithful and true! Dolly repeated the phrase with the scorn of some experience. If words, she said to herself, could make the things which they named so glibly, what space would hold the love

and fidelity of men? It is their scarcity which makes them so much talked about and so valuable. Then she demanded riotously from Betsy a rigid account of the doings which had led up to this awful surprise. The recital took up the entire three days of the journey into Virginia, or one day for each week of love's progress in Maryland; then three weeks were devoted to an analysis of the whole matter; and two weeks of constructive work on the future closed the most interesting six weeks which these two girls had ever known.

"No romance that I ever read or heard can surpass it," was Dolly's conclusion. "Then the scene on the road. . . ."

She rose to act it, the better to recall its sweet loveliness.

"But how does it compare," said she pausing, "with another scene for which it is only a preparation? Before my vision rises the court of an emperor: lovely women and noble men in splendid costumes pass up and down a hall of barbaric beauty. . . ."

"Make it several halls while you are in the trance," Betsy suggested, sourly, for she was now suspicious of Dolly's good will.

"Barbaric splendor is better. I got that phrase into my last English composition at school. Do not interrupt me. But the noblest man and the handsomest woman of those brilliant throngs are Prince Jerome and his American bride. Every eye is turned upon them: even the emperor's anger it stilled at the sight of American loveliness. Can the wilderness develop such flowers, he murmurs."

"Baron, he whispers to his chief officer, while Prin-

cess Betsy is kissing his fat hand, send over to Baltimore and pluck fifty of these wild flowers and distribute them to the nobles of our court. Heaven knows, and he looked over the crowd of ugly women sighing, heaven knows we need 'em."

"Then shall I recommend by name the charming Dolly Manners for the position next to mine," said Betsy.

The girls laughed, but the charming Dolly felt the sting. Betsy bore her exile badly, and grew thin and pale for the first weeks, though her soul was nourished by an occasional letter from her Jerome. Two feelings racked her heart, love and ambition; but quite unable to analyze her little emotions she called the two by the name of one, love. Young and elastic in her temperament, she would have found no difficulty in dealing with either passion by itself; before the two her nature found itself helpless. Love was intensified by the brilliant prospect held out to it by ambition. Dolly rather maliciously revealed to the poor girl the emotions contending in her innocent soul.

"Really, my dear, you must do something to raise your spirits," she said, "and to keep your beauty. A lover cares not for pale cheeks, and sunken eyes. You are becoming a perfect fright. It is very unjust to your cousins, who spare nothing to make you happy."

"Would you not grow pale in my condition, Dolly?"

"What! with the certainty of marrying a royal personage before the year is out? Upon my word, what a question!"

"How you harp on the rank of Jerome, when he

never can be anything more than an admiral. Do I love him for his chances of greatness?"

"Faith, you do, my dear, I'll wager my gloves. And is it not his relationship to the General Bonaparte, and his coming glory, that has made the young Lieutenant so interesting to us all? Deny it if you can. Every mother's daughter of us deserted our own lieutenants when this Frenchman appeared. Now, if I had to choose between two plain lieutenants, give me Bob Barry any day to a score of Bonapartes. But Prince Bonaparte! Ah!"

The bliss suggested by this last sound set Miss Patterson laughing, and she beat a hasty retreat from the field, much shocked at the selfishness suddenly revealed in her own heart. She loved Jerome without doubt. She had never loved anyone in that way. Day and night his image haunted her mind. If she lost him, it seemed that she must die. Yet she felt that life was sweet, and that somehow, as others had endured grief, she would survive for happiness of a kind. But to lose that vision of greatness which Jerome had brought to her, to give up the dream of living in Europe, at court, beside a throne: a blank opened in the future, an icy chill fell on her mind, life would have little comfort for her. Thus she learned of her ambition as well as her love.

CHAPTER IV.

SO THEY WERE MARRIED.

HAVING learned the truth it was not Miss Patterson's way to turn her back on it, and persuade herself that someone had made a mistake. She loved, and she aspired to high position. Lucky for her that both passions could be satisfied in the same lover. The outlook however did not improve with time. Chill November came and Dolly Manners returned home with a sweet message to Jerome, just three small words, faithful and true. Poor Betsy remained alone. The leaves turned red and yellow, and fell to the ground. Her hopes fell with them, withered and dead. The cold rain beat the dead leaves into hideous decay; her salt tears fell on her dying hopes and quickened them into life again. She always felt more hopeful after a good shower of tears. Nevertheless the strain began to tell on her, her color went with her appetite, and her plumpness suddenly faded away till the soft skin lay wrinkled on her little bones.

The alarm of her cousins brought Papa down from Baltimore by express, and the sight of the wan thing filled him with despair. He was a man of affairs, sensible with the sense of long and varied experience, aware of the strength of nature and the obstinacy of passion. He could not afford to lose his darling in

any fashion, but least of all as a victim to the folly of love. She had pined away until in his arms she felt light as a feather. Truly, he said to himself, first love may be fool-love, yet it is more than a match for wisdom while it lasts. He foresaw surrender evidently, but first he tried a gentle argument.

"Strange, strange," said he, shaking his head sadly, "that a mere stranger should make such a change in you, Elisabeth. If father and brother and aunt and friend were swept away by a flood, you would have your time of grief for us, but never lose your appetite."

"I'd rather have love affect my stomach than my mind," answered she, in her own bright way. "If you all left me that way I should only go mad."

The tears rushed into his eyes, but he drove them back.

"It seems to me that since I learned to love Jerome that I love you and Robert and Aunt Hester more than ever," she went on. "I don't like to lose my appetite and my spirits. It does no good. I would rather wait for Jerome in good health, for I can and will wait, papa, but the sorrow eats into me."

"I must fain wonder at it, rosebud," said he. "What mystery is there in it? Do you see things with enchanted eyes? If you should die to-night, this gallant officer would make love and marry next year. If you lost your beauty through small-pox he would run away across the sea. And we would mourn you, or stand by to comfort you."

"If he died to-night," she replied softly, "I would mourn him till I died too. If he lost his beauty

through disease, I would be faithful to him. If he does not feel the same way to me, then I would never marry him, only just die."

"That is true love," he admitted with a laugh. "Always this black head had wisdom in it, even when most foolish. But understand, dear, that what I say is true and for your good."

"I believe it, and here's the good the truth has done," holding out the shadowy hands, in which there was beauty but little substance.

"If he were worthy of you, but the froth of the Terror is he, old in sin, as one may see in his young face."

"He repented of his sins long ago, papa. Then we are all sinners."

"I shall tell you after a little, Elisabeth, how great a sensation the news of your folly created. . . ."

"What, is it known?" and she leaped away from him in anger.

"Only to the French officers who have the care of the Lieutenant," he said hastily, "and to the representatives of the French government in this country. They have all warned young Bonaparte and me that Napoleon will never recognize this marriage, and that a valid marriage cannot be performed without the consent of the young man's relatives. They have sent word to the First Consul, and they say his orders to his brother will be severe."

"You are all against me," she murmured, and the tears fell fast.

The father's heart was sore, and he took her in his arms again. Never since her babyhood had he been able to endure the sight of her tears.

"What can we do against an emperor, child?"

"Jerome can stay in America," said she, detecting suddenly his readiness to surrender on conditions.

"How could he, with no income, cut off by his family? How could he stand the sight of his entire family enjoying royal power in Europe, while he starved in the wilderness? My darling, how could you yourself endure it? For it is our nature never to be content with what we have, and to desire what we have not. Ah, I can see that you would not make half the pother about Jerome, were he not in the way of being a prince."

"Just as much, papa, believe me, but of course without such good reasons."

Her archness, peeping out of the wan face, forced the unwilling laugh from him.

"Bid me go home, and say to him: depart, Frenchman, and never return. Sweetheart, it is your only safety from yourself as from him. It's no use to argue. Cut the knot and . . ."

"Die," she gasped, falling limp in his arms. "I cannot help it, I cannot live without him. . . . I must die. . . . I am dying now. . . ."

She fainted for a moment, but rallied before he could get restoratives.

"Don't call anyone, papa. I am quite over it. Just a moment."

He sat anxiously beside her, holding her hand. He was conquered, and showed his submission clear even to her innocent eyes. There remained for him to say humbly:

"Come home and marry the Lieutenant."

He had come down to say that, if pleading and argument proved useless; but a fear of more fainting prevented him from uttering the words. When Betsy had recovered sufficiently, she went off to bed, and did without the good news until morning, while papa passed almost a sleepless night, tortured by the fancy that he had seen death looking out of her lovely eyes. What constancy on the part of a mere baby of a girl! And matched, too, by the same virtue in young and light-headed Jerome!

From the moment Betsy left Baltimore the Lieutenant had not failed to besiege the Patterson family by every art known to love's war, and Mr. Patterson found himself attacked daily by the very members of his family, in the most surprising places, and the most effective modes. It had taken Jerome but a short time to convince the world that he meant to marry Elisabeth Patterson no matter what the opposition or the consequences; and this determination forced the interested to examine the difficulties more seriously, and to seek a proper solution of them. In spite of his first refusal Mr. Patterson had been forced to grant Jerome another interview. In spite of his rooted dislike of a scapegrace he had to admit that the young Frenchman charmed him. Moreover, Jerome answered all arguments with good sense, good humor, and a nimble wit; so that in time Mr. Patterson came to argue with him amicably. All Baltimore, headed by lively Dolly Manners, took up the cause of the lovers, and life became rather embarrassing for a man of Mr. Patterson's habits and temper.

"You are both too young to know your own hearts,

and you in particular, Lieutenant, are too young to grasp this situation," was his regular objection.

"Not so long ago I thought myself too old to feel a romantic passion," Jerome answered merrily. "In France we have lived quickly since the Revolution. I thought to marry years ago, but never met the woman who takes possession of a man so that he *must* marry."

"If you really love my daughter, it seems to me that you should not expose her to the danger of rejection by your distinguished and powerful brother. There is no doubt in my mind that he will attack the marriage, and destroy it as far as France is concerned."

"Then I shall never return to France, sir," Jerome answered. "But I am without fear on this point. I know the First Consul. He will surely be angry. If he dreams of a crown, he would cut me off from any share in his power. But I am the youngest of his brothers, and of little importance to his schemes. He is kind-hearted, and would certainly permit me to live at his court. Anyway he cannot reach me in America."

"Then you are a Catholic, and your sect does not recognize marriage with a Protestant."

"Quite the contrary. It will only be necessary to appeal to Bishop Carroll for permission. You are acquainted with this charming bishop. He will not make half the trouble you are making in tying the knot for me."

"We are Protestants. I do not like the idea of seeing my child married by a Catholic priest," said Patterson, off his guard for the moment.

"I was thinking only of your daughter. If we are to be on our guard against any attempt on the part of the First Consul, we must comply with all the conditions that insure the validity of my marriage in France."

A remark which the man of business considered very thoughtful for such a character as young Bonaparte. Thus were the difficulties weighed during those long weeks of Betsy's exile, and amid increasing excitement; for the representatives of the French government, well informed of the drift of affairs at home, made most impressive statements and protests to Jerome and to Mr. Patterson. His friends quietly advised the Lieutenant to withdraw, for the lady's sake at least, since all the omens were against her happiness. Official protest and friendly warning simply increased his interest in the game of love, and vastly amused him. And when were these weapons ever of use against determined passion? The merry war went on, however, until the patience of all but the lovers wore away, and so it might have continued had not the news of Betsy's failing health brought the matter to its final stage. Mr. Patterson came to the conclusion that he had done all that a good father was bound to do. The lovers were sane young people, even if love had made them foolish. Since they had no fear of the consequences, why keep up a situation of misery? With this feeling he hastened to his failing child in Virginia.

She had quite recovered herself by breakfast next morning, and in the delight of having her cruel father beside her, ate a fine chop and some other antidotes

to love; and this while he maintained a set face against her most winning smile. Unconditional surrender is as bitter to merchants as to generals. He calculated that with her little appetite satisfied she would not faint easily over his brusque declaration. To a courteous inquiry from Cousin Herrick he replied:

"I'm going to stay two days, Cousin, and then go home. Elisabeth, you will return with me, and get ready to marry your French Lieutenant."

"Thank you, papa," she said sweetly, and he would have been angered at her coolness, but for the sight of the chop, and the absolute fact that she began to grow fat before the breakfast was over. Yet during his stay, and on the journey home he declined her sweetest caresses with severe words.

"They mean nothing," he said. "You do not love me. How can I believe in a love which rejects its object for the sake of a man known to you, and very slimly, two months? No more than I can believe in your love for Bonaparte or his for you. So spare me your caresses, foolish child, and go your way. You and the Lieutenant will laugh, but I shall only weep."

She paid less attention to this rebuff than to the squirrels that played on the roadside, knowing how brief is anger with those we love. She had entered the seventh heaven of happiness, and loved the whole world. Radiance glowed from the little form. She entered her circle at home in triumph, leaning on her Lieutenant's arm. And oh! how sweet to youth is triumph!

Then after a proper delay they were married in

modest state. What did she wear? Triumph and love, with some supplementary garments in gauzy white and gold! Who were present? Those who loved her, with many admirers besides! So lovely they looked, this obstinate pair of doves, that the mild bishop who had strongly advised Jerome against this union, the strenuous father who had fought it, the officials who on behalf of the First Consul had aided him, all felt a secret delight that their opposition had been in vain.

Her lover inspired Betsy, her beauty inspired him. As they stood in the severe, ecclesiastical room of the bishop, surrounded by the whispering guests, she became suddenly conscious of one impressive fact: that she had taken her place among the great ones of the world. This marriage, the event of the week in America, had become an international affair, discussed in courts. With a thrill of such joy as she had never felt, nor even dreamed of, she saw herself standing in the light of a throne. The glory of the purple streamed over her pathway, and reflected its gorgeous hues in the eyes of all who looked at her. Poor Elisabeth! she did not know at that moment how closely the imperial color resembles the color of blood.

She loved, and was loved; his arms were about her forever; in him she had triumphed; and as youth, like infancy, can hold but one thing at a time in mind, her happiness raised her like a flood above the level of life, and carried her on to glory!

CHAPTER V.

THE SHADOW OF THE THRONE.

THE two butterflies fluttered all over the land from the day of their union, sought for by all, gazed upon with envy. The rumors of Napoleon's approaching apotheosis scented the air like the winds of Spring, and the fashionable world fell down in adoration before the man and woman who would soon be royal and imperial, and might yet together ascend a throne. An intoxication had taken possession of Elisabeth. No princess of the house of Hapsburg could have hit off all the virtues and failings of her position more happily than the little woman who played the part in the American wilderness. She had a rare instinct for the new game, and guided headlong Jerome through its intricacies.

They must not go everywhere, must be exclusive in giving and accepting hospitality, must demand this form of etiquette and that, must avoid embarrassing situations. Her shrewdness and tact amused him, who had none of these qualities; but the building up of fences around that freedom of action which made the wilderness so pleasant began at last to annoy him. He tore down the fences. He had not deep respect or affection for the court of his distinguished brother, chiefly because it had given him all the trouble of

his life; and it became difficult for him to describe as fully as Betsy would have liked the scenes and personages and incidents which he had encountered. He saw that life at court for her meant enchantment. As he had no desire or intention to return to Paris for years, her passion promised future trouble.

"Make up your mind, dear," said she, when his purpose to remain in America became clear, "that I must see Paris, and the court. The whole world is asking me when we are to go home, and I am saying, very soon."

"Pay no attention to the whole world, love, only to me. If you had seen me fly out of Paris, you would understand how unwilling I am to return."

"If I wish it?" she murmured.

"Then I swear it shall be done . . . sometime."

"How soon love fades," was her comment on the last word.

"In a court," he added. "You have had your fortune told. Did not the gipsy say that a court would be fatal to you and me?"

"As if I believed her! Ah, Jerome, you have enjoyed the glory of a court, and I have never seen one. You have mingled with the great, and I have lived with the plainest people."

"You are luckier than I, dearest. The glory of a court! It's really in the uniforms and dresses. I have seen it . . . in heaps . . . in the pawn-shops of Paris. The great! You should hear them swear with the colic or the toothache. You remind me of a young man I met in the Tuileries the day before I left France, the young Marquis Consalvi."

"The young Marquis," she repeated, softly. "How lovely he must have been!"

"Then that's the end of my story," with pretended jealousy.

"I meant the title, love, just only the title," she pleaded, sinking down beside him to hear of the land of enchantment. He could work this spell on her at will.

"He came to Paris with his brother the Cardinal Consalvi. He knew nothing of Napoleon and his brother knew all, like you and me, sweet. He wanted to see the great general, the First Consul, to fall down and adore him, to speak with him, touch his hand; and his brother the cardinal would have fled to the ends of the earth to avoid Napoleon."

"How did the Marquis look?"

"Very handsome, Italian style . . . big, melting eyes, delicate, sweet, sleepy face . . . that looked like a tiger's now and then . . . a good young man, innocent, crazy to see and hear at the court of the Tuileries."

"And how did the Cardinal look?"

"Ah, there was a man for you. He was so calm and cold, and they were trying their best to frighten him. They dragged him through one room, and then another, and put up all kinds of trickery, but he never melted. Now, I took the Marquis right straight to the audience-chamber, and we peeped at the First Consul from a hole in a curtain—"

"Oh, how delightful!"

"And we were caught, and scolded, and I got my commission, and skipped like a deer."

"But the Marquis and the Cardinal?"

"I saw them to their carriage, and never saw them since. But I heard that the First Consul simply tortured the life out of both before he let them go. Elise, my sweet, pray that you and I may never fall into the hands of my brother when he is scheming for power."

He threw up his hands with a gesture of real despair, and as if to emphasize the action a letter dropped from the pocket of his coat, a letter which Elisabeth had not seen, which he did not wish her to see. He watched her in silence as with the fatal curiosity of Eve she drew out the enclosure from the envelope, smoothed the folded document, and read the cold, courteous, bitter words of the First Consul, as reported by the Minister of Marine, to the French ambassador in Washington, touching the marriage of Jerome. Briefly, the unfortunate woman who had dared to entrap Jerome, in spite of the warnings of the government, would never be recognized as the wife of a Bonaparte, and never received in France. She looked at him with pallid face, and accusing eyes.

"And you never told me, Jerome."

"I had not the heart, when you were dreaming of the glories of the court, to show you some of its miseries."

"Did you think I was afraid?" rising to her feet with lofty pride.

"I thought of nothing but of saving you pain and humiliation. The First Consul has a mania for humiliating the members of his family."

"Will you promise to show me from this time on all the letters from France that relate to me?"

"I promise, since you wish it."

Then she fell to weeping for five minutes, and he wept with her out of loving sympathy, for he could see nothing to start even a woman's easy tears. The incident, however, sobered Elisabeth a little, and a shadow fell on her bright nature. She began to do some thinking after the fashion of her sex. Jerome never thought at all, not merely because of the labor, but chiefly because of its uselessness. Thoughts flew into his mind on a given subject like birds into a room, and then flew out again half frightened by the experience. He had observed all the pother made over his marriage, had listened to the protests of French officials respectfully, and had understood the motive of the hospitality lavished upon him and his bride: all had their source in the supposition that Napoleon would soon seize the crown of France and proclaim himself emperor. When he thought of the thing, as he did twice, its absurdity seemed perfectly clear to him. He demonstrated it to his bride with the loyalty of a republican and the reasoning of a royalist. It was simply impossible. Therefore consternation seized him when the French minister took him aside one night at a brilliant reception, and gave him a piece of secret information.

"I am commanded to inform you, Lieutenant," said the diplomat with deferential courtesy, "that your illustrious brother will proclaim himself Emperor of the French sometime in May."

"Thank you," said Jerome solemnly.

"I see that you do not credit the information, Lieutenant. The question has already been voted upon by the people, and the nation has given its consent. It is the wish of the Emperor, for such he is in fact, that you should prepare yourself for the exalted rank which will come to you, as a prince of the empire."

"I am quite prepared," Jerome replied lightly, but a thrill of something like terror swept through his body. "All will depend on the instructions sent to you by the First Consul, naturally."

"Naturally," answered the Minister with a smile.

Jerome refused to discuss the matter further, knowing quite well that the official must have disagreeable information affecting his wife. Pleasant as was the thought that his little darling would soon attain the glory of a royal title, and that he had brought her the honor, his heart sank before the woe bound to follow his elevation. He would not utter the sad thoughts that crowded upon him. He thrust them out with the spoken determination to remain in the United States at all hazards, yet felt in the utterance of the words some deep-seated weakness of purpose that made them seem ridiculous. In confusion of thought Jerome always became reckless, and blurted out the truth to Elisabeth that night in a single phrase.

"Do you know," said she, after their return from the reception, "that heads wagged at your little exchange of words with the Minister?"

"I do, Your Highness," he replied humorously.

"Jerome," she gasped with beseeching hands.

"He told me to prepare for what seems to be inevi-

table. The people have voted that Napoleon shall be their emperor. What I thought impossible, a wild dream, has come true. Sweet, you are already the Princess Jerome Bonaparte."

"And you are the Prince!"

He took her in his arms, and they could not speak for some moments, she with the bliss of her elevation, and he with the sense of coming woe. But he rejoiced in her childlike joy, and refused to look on the shadows of the picture. The intoxication of the moment proved irresistible. Spring had come, and had it been dead winter the presence of these fortunate lovers would have wreathed the earth with blossoms and the world with smiles. Ships brought first the news of the plebiscite in France and set every tongue wagging. Society thrilled to its depths whenever Jerome and his Betsy appeared at a function. Dolly Manners hastened to New York to be near her dearest Betsy when the great news should arrive, and wept all the way at the ill-luck which had sent her home a day too soon after the week in Jerome's fascinating but frivolous company. Such is fate, she said. The Bonapartes conducted themselves with the utmost discretion, and practised that simplicity which ever marks lofty personages; indeed Jerome would have carried it too far by declaring publicly his intention to refuse princely rank and to remain a republican, had not his wife vetoed the resolution. He had not the heart to destroy her illusions. Who would, for a creature so lovely, so fitted for royal rank? And finally came the news that on the eighteenth of May, in the year of Our Lord 1804,

the First Consul of France had assumed an imperial crown, the crown of Charlemagne, and had founded the Napoleonic dynasty.

Elisabeth was a young woman of intellect and will, far superior to her husband on these points; and she woke to two facts the morning after this portentous announcement. The first was the need for swift and effective action in her own behalf; for the horror of remaining in their present position, parrying the endless inquiries as to their future movements, could not be endured. The second fact was the odd behavior of Jerome since the little talk with the Minister. That had to be explained. She could no longer understand him. They took advantage of a pleasant twilight, when social obligations were for the moment out of sight, to examine into matters. She wondered at his willingness to sit in quiet even for a moment, and expressed her wonder.

"I have accepted a visit from M. Pichon for this evening," said he. "He has news for me from the Emperor, and I wish you to hear it. I shall not receive him otherwise."

In sorrowful silence she put her arms about him, full of apprehension. Now indeed she felt like a chill the heavy shadow of the throne falling across her happiness, and the two said but little until the representative of the French monarch made his appearance; a polite little man, who knew how to conduct himself in the presence of His Highness, and to make a subtle difference in his lavish respects to the American wife, never to be recognized as Her Highness. His long introduction led Prince Jerome

to remark that his official communications must be made in the presence of the lady.

"I deeply regret the necessity of causing Madame any pain," said M. Pichon sincerely, "but if Your Highness commands . . ."

Jerome made a gesture for him to begin.

"His Imperial Majesty repeats with emphasis the request made some time ago that Your Highness should return home with all speed."

"Ah," thought Elisabeth, "he never told me . . . no wonder he acted strangely."

"I shall be happy to do so the moment my wife fixes the date," said Jerome with a curious smile.

"Am I delaying you, dear? I am ready at any time."

"The embarrassing point, however," said M. Pichon gently but with decision, and then he paused, looking at Prince Jerome.

"Continue," said Jerome.

"No French vessel is allowed to carry Madame to France, by a decree of the Emperor; nor will she be allowed to set foot on French territory."

"A wife may go with her husband anywhere," Elisabeth replied proudly and calmly, though her heart sank like lead.

"True. Unhappily in this case the law of France does not recognize your marriage, Madame."

"Therefore, my dear Princess," said Jerome lightly, "if I am to remain your husband I must remain with you in your own land, for which favor let us be devoutly thankful. In France you are not a wife."

She could not quite grasp the spirit which prompted

his words. Her soul filled up on a sudden with desolation, as the lovely dream of the honeymoon faded like a cloud from her imagination. It was all over.

"There is another thing," M. Pichon said smoothly with his eyes fixed on her. "Owing to the American circumstances, His Highness has been deprived by a decree of the Senate of his right to succeed his brother on the throne."

"A real calamity," cried Jerome gaily, "with Joseph and Louis and Lucien and their children ahead of me. You see, my Princess, what I have lost by the American circumstances."

"His Highness Prince Lucien also," M. Pichon said with deference. "I would like to be enabled to send to the Emperor definite information as to the intentions of Your Highness."

"Tell him," said Jerome, "that I shall sail when I can take my wife with me."

M. Pichon bowed and rose to depart.

"No, delay a little," said Elisabeth. "In a day or two, sir, we shall give you definite information."

M. Pichon bowed again and again and backed to the door and out of sight, while the poor little Princess, stripped of her glory, like Cinderella sitting on her pumpkin, sobbed bitterly in her disappointment, horror and shame.

"You never told me. The whole world knew it. . . ."

"Only the part about the succession, dearest."

"But the others . . . the marriage . . . the ships. . . ."

"Oh, I left them to fellows like Pichon to tell. They

get a salary for such work. What does it matter anyway? I rejoice to remain in this country forever. Faithful and true!"

"Never, never, never! Jerome, we shall go to France!"

Her cry of despair pierced his heart, and his levity fled.

"Dearest and sweetest and best," said he solemnly, "be warned in time. I am safe here. It is dangerous and impossible to fight with an emperor. Let us be content with what honor we have, and not lose it and happiness by attempting the impossible."

Never had Jerome spoken so wisely.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPERIAL MESSAGE.

AN, what desolation invades the soul when the hope of success leaves it! Elisabeth did not know, until the dream had vanished, how sure she had been of a career at court, a career of splendor. Now she knew that for a time something like madness had possessed her, had closed her ears to her father's warnings, to her own good sense, to all advice. Bitterness filled her mouth, that bitterness of which she had read as eating out the hearts of genius unrecognized or scorned. She was the princess Jerome Bonaparte, but only in America. The court shut its doors against her at the order of Napoleon.

Feeling the uselessness of mere grief and childish reproaches, of complaints about her sad fate and miserable condition, she made a resolution to know the worst at once, and to act accordingly. Her marriage, both by American law and the canons of the Catholic Church, was valid; before that Church to which the Bonapartes belonged it was indissoluble; and, as Jerome reminded her, when the Church let Henry VIII of England go rather than sanction his divorce from Queen Katherine, it was highly improbable that a lesser marriage would be declared null to please a

monarch of that morning. Therefore she determined to fight to the end for her rights as a wife.

Sadly enough suspicion of Jerome's loyalty rent her heart almost from the first. He was a man, with the strong ambition of a man. If she longed for the honors and pleasures of court, surely he, who could have them so splendidly for the asking, must be mad with eagerness to return to France; from which she kept him, since the Emperor had closed the doors to her. He would tire of her, if his return home were long delayed. She must find some way of getting into France with him, and falling on her knees before the conqueror. Desperation seized her along with desolation, and she began to show signs of her emotion. The mask dropped off occasionally, and revealed to husband and friends how much she suffered.

"Why do you grieve?" he said fondly.

"Because you are going to leave me," she murmured.

"Faithful and true," he answered

"But the temptation, Jerome. You would be more than man to withstand it. I do not blame you, since I feel weak before it."

"I have no temptation, dearest, except to stay with you too long and too late, keeping our friends waiting."

He felt the force of her suspicion, for he too had begun to dream. Glory and power called to him, but would have nothing to do with his wife. To receive their crowns he must climb the heights without her. While Napoleon was simply First Consul it had been easy to reject the slender honors falling to a younger brother's share. Now he often found himself the center of a dreamland court, bowed to by the great,

a dream-king! He began to understand his wife's intoxication, and he abandoned himself more and more to the lovely vision. What would be easier than to appeal in person to the Emperor, to show him Elisabeth's portrait, to bring her before the monarch and let her loveliness make its appeal for justice? In broad daylight he knew that his brother would never recognize the marriage, and that honor for him and safety for his wife depended on remaining in America.

Long before he had caught the drift of his own visions the watchful and melancholic eye of Elisabeth had seen and understood. He laughed at her reproaches, with the assurance that she would be first to fail in true and faithful love.

"We are safe in the wilderness, and I vote to stay in it," he said. "But you are bent on leaving it, you are bound to go to France, and there I shall lose both you and my honor. I am not beyond temptation."

Society looked in vain for signs of friction in their companionship. It remained kind, but could not help a little spitefulness, which Dolly Manners retailed to her dearest Betsy. It was the only way open to the young lady to express her own feelings. Yet the two loved each other faithfully, and forgave the spiteful utterances of one day in the heat of the next day's affection. The world called her Princess, and gave her precedence in its functions; and a feeling grew that the whole country must stand by her against Napoleon's injustice.

"My dear, you must get to France," Dolly Manners declared after a long recital of spite utterances from

the people who swore to defend Jerome's wife against all that Napoleon might attempt.

"I am afraid of the sea," said Betsy.

"Well, better to be drowned in the sea than in the odious criticisms of one's friends. My dear, the talk will be something awful, if you cannot take your proper position in France. Mrs. Adams said yesterday that it would be difficult for you to come down to plain Mrs. Bonaparte, if you elected to remain here. And someone suggested that the question of dropping a title which the French court did not recognize ought to be taken up at once."

"Oh, they must talk, Dolly. If it were certain that I were to set out for France to-morrow, and that the Emperor would meet me half way over the ocean, the talk would be spiteful. I have no fears of the result, if I can only persuade Jerome to start for home."

It was consoling at least to have the young husband at her side during the delay, a consolation so sweet that she was determined on never losing it. Whither he went, she would go. They spent the autumn at her father's house in Baltimore. What courage to sit facing him daily, the dear, dignified old man, whose warnings all threatened to come true! He did not remind her of her past troubles, being content to see her happy. Often his eyes were moist with unshed tears. At the worst the poor child would have the shelter of his home, and the strength of his strong name to shield her in sorrow. Prince Jerome had prepared him for Betsy's schemes, in a brief talk on the very grave situation.

"Our only safety is here," said Jerome, "but Elisabeth will not be persuaded of it. She fears that I shall mourn for France and glory, and I may. But while we stay in America there will be no temptation, and I can quench my thirst by love and pleasure."

"If you went to France, what would happen?" said Mr. Patterson.

"Anything, naturally. I could not bring my wife with me. After falling into my brother's hands, what would become of me? He could imprison me, even shoot me, though he would not do either I think. But it would be the same thing, when I could not get out of France, and Elisabeth could not get in. He is a strong man, and I am weak before him. Elisabeth thinks that she or I might persuade him, but he is beyond entreaty, once he takes up a certain course."

"For the present I agree with you that France is not to be thought of. I shall tell Betsy so."

Before telling her he dwelt on the suggestive word used by Jerome, and the look which accompanied it. Temptation! Ah, the young man knew his own weakness. With Napoleon glowering at him, and holding the bauble of kingship before his eyes, Jerome would find the American wilderness rather far off and dreary. What a faded flower his wife would seem, looked at across the sea from the towering heights of the new empire! Patterson began to respect the honesty of the boy, and to appreciate the good stuff which preferred the wilderness and fidelity, to the court and its dangers. Betsy did not think much of it, and flouted her father's insinuations. Her confidence had returned in the comfort of home, and her dreams had returned.

They presented her as a queen to her own mind and to the dream-world, a position which she took easily in her dreams, though it made her gasp with delight in the daytime.

"There is only one thing to do, father," she declared. "Find a ship that will take us to France, or near it, so that together we can go before the Emperor, and demand justice."

"You are always for taking the bull by the horns," said the father, smiling at his own prominent trait in this slip of a girl. "But do you forget that this bull is vicious? I admit, what did not appear so clear to me before, that Jerome loves you, and will do much for you; but there is a weakness in him, which he recognizes himself. It will surrender to Napoleon. Why should you expose your lover to that great trial of his love? A crown in exchange for you? And a frightful alternative, a prison without you? Have you become selfish all at once?"

She had never been anything else, but for the moment he dissembled. With her cheek to his she declared:

"He will never desert me, and you know it, father."

"Then see how you expose your own life. This new Emperor is bent on founding a new dynasty in France. He must marry his brothers and sisters to the reigning princes in Europe. He will think no more of slaying you than of killing a fly."

"Shall I tell you a secret, father dear? I prefer death to the situation here. I would rather die in a French jail than bear the affronts of people here at home."

"You have not courage to face the silly criticism

of your own circle, and yet you would face an Emperor."

"Yes, yes, a dozen emperors in defence of my rights," she cried, dancing about the room, "and death at the end of it. There's glory in it, compared to dying by inches under the stings of Baltimore wasps."

"You cannot enter France."

"I can. Get me a ship and let me try."

"If you get in you will not get out."

"As a citizen of America and a woman I can and will. If Napoleon holds me, all Europe will begin to discuss my rights, just to annoy him."

"And if you make international trouble?"

"Oh, if I only do! If I can get even with that monster of an Emperor by making trouble for him, I shall be tickled to death."

"You are losing your senses, daughter, and I shall not let you go. Your husband is opposed to it, your best interests too, so you must stay here until your almighty brother-in-law invites you to his court properly."

She accused him of selfishness, and wept, but he saw in her eyes that burning determination which from childhood carried all before it, because it consumed her when it did not move others. While he thought the matter over carefully a direct letter for Jerome from the Emperor arrived. It voiced the orders of a despot, not the feelings of a brother, commanding the speedy return of Jerome to his duties as a prince of the empire, his separation from the lady who kept him from his sovereign, and readiness to marry almost as soon as he arrived in France; with alternatives of

prison, banishment, alienation, disinheritance, should he prove so foolish or so bold as to defy his imperial master. As for the lady who had gone through a marriage ceremony with him, in defiance of the laws of France, a special decree of the Senate would soon be passed to exclude her forever from French territory; Jerome might settle with her on her own terms, and the Emperor would pay the bill; but any hope of recognition she must banish, and the severest treatment would be her lot if she ever set foot in France. The Emperor condescended to draw a picture of the glory which awaited Jerome at home, kingly power and a high share in Napoleon's schemes for dominating the world. Was he such a fool as to barter this gift of fortune for the love of a woman? Was the love of all the women of time worth the brilliant career opened to him? Very likely, because he had never known the meaning of permanent rank and power, he would throw away a crown for the smile of a woman whose doom was to grow old; wiser men, even born to the purple, had done such things; therefore he counseled Jerome to hasten home and make trial of the new career; and should the test prove the essential smallness of his mind, he could go back to his wilderness and his American savage. The Emperor wanted no jellyfish in his court, but imperial men, able to bear the weight of a crown and to lead an army to victory or death! Jerome read this letter pompously to his wife and her father, and the shrewd merchant could see how the appeal of the imperial brother affected the young man.

"Now you see, Elisabeth, my princess," he said

gaily but seriously, "the exact quality of the temptation which this dear man places before me. I know, I feel right here, that I shall not withstand it in France. Is it not a great thing to be a king? To be sure, at this distance, I can see what I could not see over there, the bore of being a king, of running a court, of leading an army. Did I not see my brother as first consul, and the men who followed him? They spent a great part of their leisure cursing this and that, because things did not go with them as they liked. Tell me, Elisabeth, to write back to this Emperor: I prefer the love of one woman to all the crowns of Europe."

"Tell him, child," repeated her father, pressing her to his bosom.

"You shall have the crown and the woman too," she answered. "With me at your side all the boredom of a court will turn into pleasure."

"Oh, that would be heaven, dearest, but with my brother the thing is not possible. Every minute I feel more and more that we must choose. You can see that this Emperor is very angry. My brother Lucien has defied him, he remains a republican, and ridicules his schemes for glory. Louis also misbehaves. When I follow suit, his rage will be bloody. No, no, we must choose, pet. Love and the forest: a throne and eternal separation."

"He is right, I feel it too," said her father. "Tell him to write as he wishes to his brother."

"Get me the ship, father," was her reply. Jerome gave a gesture of despair.

"How easily we slay our own happiness," the old man thought.

"One cannot put old brains in a young head," he said aloud. "I advise you therefore, Jerome, to take the matter into your own hands and settle it with the authority of a husband. Write your refusal to the Emperor, and let this silly child get over her folly as she may."

"Dear father," she answered, patting his cheek, "you will never get over your belief in force. If you had to, I know you would try to learn the fiddle in a day. There is just one thing for you to do: get me a ship. Leave all the rest to time and fate and me."

"And Napoleon," said Jerome.

"Get me the ship, papa. It is the bridge to all the rest."

"Very well," said papa calmly, "a ship it shall be. You cannot go direct to France, and it would be useless to go to England. You shall have a ship to Lisbon, a neutral territory, where you may discuss the best means of getting into a French jail. I wash my hands of the whole affair."

"So you have the very journey planned, papa? Ah, you foresaw all along how it would turn out. Thanks, and thanks again. You have done your share. Now you shall see how I shall do mine."

He paid no attention to her hearty embrace, for Jerome's manner held his attention. Was it relief, even gladness, that shone in his eyes? The young prince protested affably against so sudden a decision, and pointed out many objections. He was overborne of course, and submitted gracefully with a French

shrug, equivalent to Mr. Patterson's last declaration. His private arguments had no effect on the young wife. Escape from her cruel situation at home dulled her perception of future dangers. At sea they could discuss the future, but now she must get away from the critics, the sneerers, who taunted her with the decay of her hopes, and foretold her final tragedy. She must sail away in triumph to a throne, and thus silence trivial, slanderous tongues; and she promised herself that, if fate went against her, her own land would never see her again.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LIGHTS OF LISBON.

THE father thought he knew his daughter fairly well, but the next month changed this opinion. Betty's antics while preparing to sail charmed and astonished her admirers at home, as much as her gracious reserve in public pleased society. She had won her contention in spite of family opposition. The struggle had brought out the harder traits of her disposition. The triumph dismissed them, and left Betty herself again; a sweet, tremulous, innocent, languishing creature, who began to feel suddenly the anguish of change, and who melted in her father's arms.

"How can I bear to leave you, papa?" she cried many times.

"How can I bear to lose you?" he answered. "But we must bear our suffering as best as we may. It is nature, of course."

"You might come with us, and do battle with the Emperor."

"What, have two Pattersons in jail at the same time? And how would you get out, if I were not free to fight for you?"

"You are so sure of that jail, papa."

"Just as sure as you are of a throne, pet."

"I wonder if I am sure. I dread leaving you, papa."

I am afraid of the sea. I fear that I shall never come back home. But I am not afraid of Napoleon, and I do not doubt success, and I am sure Jerome will be faithful and true. Yet I weep at night when no one is looking, and dreadful feelings say to me that nothing will be as it should be. Here I am certain," and she touched her pretty brow; "but all the rest of me is like jelly. Why is it, papa?"

"The way of a maid, nothing more. Your will is strong, but your heart is weak. But now the die is cast, and there must be no more wavering."

"Oh, not to the outsiders, only to you. And you will not come with us?"

"If you insist."

"But I do not, for you must be outside France and a jail to help me, if the worst comes to the worst."

"Your second thoughts are always very good, Betty. If you could only take my other counsels as quickly."

"When I am old, I shall have your head and heart, papa: cool, wise money-getting head, and a judicious heart."

"Where did you get that nice word?"

"Judicious? When Miss Woodby married Judge Liscombe she told Dorothy that his heart as well as his mind was judicious."

"And what do you think she meant by it?"

"I suppose that he loved just when and where he wanted to, so much and no more. The old can do these wonderful things but the young cannot."

"There does not seem to be so much difference between an old fool and a young one after all," the father said later to Aunt Hester, after describing pass-

ing discussions with Betty. The agents of Napoleon drew similar conclusions from their interviews with the young wife. Obeying the imperial orders they had assured her that entrance to France was simply impossible for her, that the attempt would lead to scandal, and might cause grave trouble between countries. It was felt that either her delusion continued very strong or secret and powerful influences were behind her enterprise. The social circle grew a conviction that she had already won her points with Napoleon. The external manner of all concerned showed confidence and even delight. Betty's friends called her Princess and Highness, and there was a fine round of farewell receptions and teas. Jerome carried himself gaily, as if there could be no doubt of his reception at home. But he concealed nothing from Mr. Patterson, and on the night before sailing they had a clear understanding of the situation.

"I tell you what I have not told Elisabeth," said Jerome in the last chat. "It would be of no use to tell her. We shall arrive in the port of Lisbon, but we shall not be permitted to land. Every port in Europe is closed against us, except those of England. When she sees that there is nothing else to do I imagine she will insist on England. She will not return here at once, no."

"Hardly. And about yourself?"

"At Lisbon the usual temptation," said Jerome, smiling, "also the usual threat. I can withstand both in the light of her dear presence, and I shall accompany her to England. There is nothing else to do."

"That seems clear sailing, unless the lively mind

of Betty finds some fool scheme to attempt. A disguise perhaps, stealing away from the ship, and footing it into France. How about that?"

"We can no more leave that ship, sir, than we can fly. If we could, travel through Portugal and Spain for us would be impossible. And if I should leave the American ship, it is likely the imperial agents would seize me and take me to Paris and a prison."

"Better tell her that, Jerome."

"She shall learn everything as it happens. Only strong events, very strong events, are able to change her mind and her will."

So Betty sailed unconscious of the iron wall against which her enterprise was marching. The departure, to use the words of Jerome, was a strong event in the annals of the time, and the scene around the ship deserved the brush of the noblest painter. The members of the family, aware of the course of events and quite sure of their darling's future movements, showed no grief or anxiety or pride. After a healthful voyage to Lisbon the young wife would enjoy a pleasant stay in England, where in time they would join her. That was all, and their calm manners puzzled Betty, who laid it to the glory which awaited her beyond the sea. The last farewell was spoken, the last handkerchief fluttered in the wind, and the ship floated lazily down the bay out of sight. A sudden thought dried Betty's tears in an instant, and she turned pettishly on her husband.

"I know now why they took it so pleasantly. They are sure I am coming back, that I'm on a fool's errand."

"Well, there's no great discovery in that, Elisabeth. Your father always called this trip a foolish affair, or a dangerous affair. Did you think you had convinced them of success?"

"There's something, something, something," insisted Betty. "I wonder what, and I shall find out."

Jerome laughed heartily at the intuition of the young creature, whose glance he met with composure.

"There's nothing, nothing, nothing," he mimicked, "but your father's conviction that nothing will happen on the other side, and that you will return next year because there's nothing."

"Nothing happen! Wait, Jerome. We shall land in Lisbon, travel into Spain, disguise ourselves near the frontier, and cross over into France as brigands, or peasants, or merchants. Then we shall steal up to Paris, find our way into the presence of your brother, fall on our knees, and cry out together, love us and we shall love you."

"If that scene, that sentiment, do not conquer him, he is a brute."

"Thank you. But now I must consider the objections to the success of the scheme. How is traveling in Portugal and Spain?"

"Comfortable but very slow."

"It will be three months before we reach Paris."

"Easily."

"Well, thank heaven, I do not lack for summer costumes. It will be easy to get disguises on the frontier?"

"Oh, very easy, if we escape the spies of the Emperor. Do not be surprised or frightened. He has

spies wherever he wants them. He knows we are en route for Lisbon. After we arrive every step will be watched, so that he may seize us the moment we step on French soil."

"Spies of the Emperor! Why, of course. And I never thought of that. They may be aboard this very ship;—nay, the ship itself may be bearing us to prison. . . ."

"Softly, sweetheart," for she began to tremble, "we are not of such importance yet, but in Lisbon, undoubtedly . . ."

"Isn't it delightful?" she whispered, with a half-terrified glance about. "Every action, every word, noted and writ down for the Emperor."

"Hardly as bad as that, pet. There are no spies here, for even an imperial government does not waste its money, if it can help it. But our journey through Portugal and Spain will be watched by the police."

After that the voyage became of special interest to Betty, who speculated on the chance of every officer and sailor and passenger on the ship being an imperial spy. Never had Jerome enjoyed a sea-voyage so much, never had his wife proved more charming, and he found it easy to repeat over and over his vows of fidelity, no matter how strong the charm of imperial favor and power. So they came in sight of Lisbon, whose lights seemed to have a message for Betty, written on the misty horizon, concerning her future.

"They are the eyes of Napoleon's spies," Jerome suggested.

"They are looking for me surely, and are saying,

when we find you then we shall speak. To-morrow night I shall know what they are saying."

"Without doubt," Jerome replied with a sad heart, feeling that the hour of anguish had arrived. The shipped dropped anchor early in the morning, and with the sun came a serious official of the court commissioned to deal with His Highness Prince Jerome alone. Finding himself in the presence of a charming young woman, whom Jerome would not part from, even to receive an imperial message, the official became very discreet. He could not permit himself to speak as he had been directed, lest his words should offend the sensibilities of Madame; it was much to be regretted that measures so severe should have been taken against a lady so beautiful and charming; nevertheless it had to be said that, while the Prince could land at his pleasure, Madame would not be permitted to leave the ship or to set foot in Portugal. It took a long explanation to make Betty understand Napoleon's power over the ports of Europe. She could land only in England. The official went away expressing a thousand regrets for his disagreeable message.

"Then we must escape secretly from this ship," said the determined Betty, "and make our way in disguise to France."

"Very well," said Jerome promptly, "but we shall be seized by the police the moment we set foot on shore, and while you are returned to the ship, I shall be handed over to French officials and hurried into France."

"Jerome, are you in league with Napoleon? Are you trying to discourage me? If all that you say

is true, we can do only one thing, return to Baltimore, which I shall never do."

"Or land in England. Rather than hear such a reproach from you, that I am in league with Napoleon, I say, let us steal ashore and cross the country in disguise. But do not forget that the moment we leave this American ship we become helpless, we fall into Napoleon's hands. He will put you again on this ship and give the captain orders to get out of French waters and stay out. You do not seem to think much of Napoleon's power. You wish to treat with him. When you become his prisoner you will feel his power and you will not be able to treat with him."

"I see, I see," she replied brokenly. "I begin to understand. His power is everywhere, and we cannot even leave this ship perhaps. There is only the choice of going home, or sailing to England. I must think it out, Jerome. There must be some other and better way."

"The safest way is home again, but I do not mind England, where I have some charming acquaintances," he reminded her.

The young wife paced the deck for some hours that morning, considering in her childish, shrewd way the first real problem of her life. It thrilled her to think that she was fighting an Emperor, and it encouraged her to recall that fifteen years previous he had been a mere lieutenant in the French army. She would beat him yet with all his power. Her little mind beat like a bird against his iron wall. To go back was impossible, and England meant the dreary round of social pleasure, criticism, and suspicion over

again. That was not to be endured. The march should be forward, even to death. Why not send Jerome into the enemy's country? Could his fidelity be relied upon, when he himself doubted his strength before Napoleon's wrath, the hardships of a prison, the seductions of a career, a crown, a royal alliance, and unstinted pleasure? She had not a doubt of it. He could dissemble, delay, and as he became powerful her chances would increase. Alone in England she would be an object of interest to her friends in both countries, and grief for her absence would so rend the heart of Jerome as to keep him worshipping at her shrine. Later on she could join him secretly. It would be an easy matter to cross from England, when smugglers found their trade undisturbed by the severest barricade. A little woman should not find it hard to steal in by a back door. By this plan a shameful return home would be avoided, her entry into England made interesting, and Jerome placed at court to carry on their cause and win in the end. Jerome's face expressed panic when these conclusions were placed before him. His honesty made a strong protest, for he felt in the depths of his heart a supreme joy at the prospect of getting back to Paris.

"You are throwing away everything, Elisabeth."

"If I am, it is fate. So far I have had everything my own way, and I must not mind if Napoleon now has a little of his own way for a time. I feel that this is our only plan. You have said to me a thousand times that you will always be faithful and true. You will now have a chance to prove it in this great temptation. If you are faithful and true, in a short time I

shall join you in France. I am willing to risk it, because I have no doubt whatever. So our happiness now depends on you, Jerome, on you, on you."

He did not shake her resolution, even by preparations for a speedy departure. The surest way to change Betty's positive opinions was to agree with her and put her recommendations into action at once. She helped him prepare his traps with sobs and tears, reproached him with cowardice when he refused to go at the last moment, and granted him a delay until the morrow upon promise of an early start in the morning. The night came down and the lights of Lisbon twinkled through the mists for the lovers seated on deck in sad converse.

"What are the lights saying to-night, Elisabeth?"

"Wait, hope, trust, and be content," she replied promptly. "You have the right, Napoleon has the wrong, and you will win. We shone here when the Emperor was not. We shall shine when he is no more."

"You are a wonderful woman," said Jerome. "How shall I live without you?"

"And how shall I live without you?"

In the morning he was gone almost with the sunrise, nor did she come on deck to see him depart. The two innocents had decided that royalty should make no public displays of grief, and Betty refused to provide the crew with gossip for retail in Baltimore. With a brief, passionate farewell in the cabin, a renewal of their love-vows, Betty's romance ended. His boat had not touched the wharf when the American ship weighed anchor and set sail for England. Betty sat in her

cabin weeping, setting forth many things in her mind, toughening her heart against all that was to come. Her desolation went beyond words. Did her father suffer so when she left him? When he looked at her vacant place did his heart sink so far? Was this anguish the intimate of true love? Oh, what an unhappy place must the world be for those who have loved and lost forever! And thus her thought deepened while her cheek grew wan until they sighted the white cliffs of England. Then her smiles began to shine again, as she thought of the sensation her arrival would make among her friends, and how easily and sweetly first place would fall to her in the high society of London.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOUSE OF THE CARDINAL.

IN Paris the April nights begin before seven o'clock, at which hour it is dark enough for lights in such houses as can afford them. Napoleon's allowance to Cardinal Consalvi, whom the Emperor had dragged into France as an important factor in his imperial schemes, was large enough to afford the luxury of early lights; in consequence Pierre, the aristocratic man-of-all-work in the household of His Eminence, was busy drawing the curtains and lighting the wax candles shortly after six. His graceful attention to the details of his work proved Pierre an unusual person. His thin, dark, hard face, typical of one section of his race, showed rare intelligence, delicate melancholy, and that sardonic humor which at times becomes satanic in its malice. If the devil broke out anywhere, he chooses the French race to embody his antics. Pierre could look in an instant like one of his agents, a position to which he aspired, without having received the slightest notice from His Satanic Majesty. Pierre therefore remained merely an agent of the Revolution, so hampered by Napoleon that its agents received no pay; and to make a living he accepted a salary from Fouché in the secret service. As a man of capacity, ready for any service, from

leading a forlorn hope to cutting an important throat, his salary was high. As he lit the last candle a bell rang. Fouché was about to leave after a short interview with His Eminence, and the bell signaled Pierre to conduct the great knave of France to the door, which he did without a trace of the rage and disgust always roused in him by the sight of this rat-catcher. Fouché paused in the waiting-room and fixed his cold gaze on the spy.

"His Eminence has a companion then. A priest?"

"No, his brother, a young, green, soft youth, crazy to see Paris."

"Well, you know enough of Paris to show it to nobles with plenty of money. Yet you do not seem to be satisfied."

"Why should I, the lifelong enemy of priests, be satisfied to become their protector?" Pierre said with feeling. "Knowing why you humiliate me—"

"Then spare me your rhetoric," said the icy voice of the Minister of Police. "You know every dagger being sharpened in France for this Cardinal. For that reason I place your body between them and Consalvi. A scratch on his skin and you shall pay for it, in cash and stripes. Besides, you must hear, see, and report everything. Have you yet learned the mission of this so-called American, Mrs. Lockhart?"

"She is really an Englishwoman, who cultivates the Italians in Paris, is protected by the Countess Franchi, and is bent on seeing His Eminence."

"A romance no doubt."

At this moment steps were heard in the outer hall and then a young man entered, with sprightly step and

charming manner. All bowed, and Pierre took his hat and walking-stick.

"I have the honor to address the Marquis Consalvi? Permit me to introduce myself, the Duke of Otranto. I have just enjoyed the honor and pleasure of an interview with His Eminence."

"It is a great honor to meet His Excellency, the Minister of Police," said the young Marquis with a profound bow.

"I have failed to change the determination of His Eminence, to remain away from the Louvre to-morrow, when the Emperor marries the young Archduchess," Fouché went on. "Yet I do not lose hope, for another will try to change his resolution. Permit me."

He beckoned to Pierre, who stood discreetly in the hall, and the man came in.

"I wish, Marquis, to present to you an official whom so far you have only known as the butler, Pierre. He is a gentleman, and has now the honor to represent the government in your household."

The Marquis and the butler bowed to each other.

"We have good reason to think," said Fouché, "that the life of the Cardinal may not always be safe from the assassin. Monsieur Soulangue will answer with his life for the Cardinal's safety while he remains in France."

"We cannot but be grateful for this token of the Emperor's affection," said the Marquis in the courtly language of the day, but in his heart he used other words most uncomplimentary to Pierre and his master. Fouché became more intimate the next moment.

"You must try your persuasion upon His Eminence,

Marquis. This is really a grave crisis in the affairs of state. If Cardinal Consalvi and his brothers of the Sacred College absent themselves from the imperial marriage to-morrow, the rage of the Emperor will be a rage of blood. Their absence will be made known to every court of Europe, it will strengthen the imperial enemies, because it will reflect upon the validity of this marriage and the legitimacy of the heirs."

"My brother is inflexible on this point," said the Marquis sadly. "He steers away from all matters connected with the imperial marriages: the divorce of Josephine for instance, and of that American woman who married Jerome."

"What a pity! That a man of his caliber should even seem to defend the two honest women whose husbands grew weary of them."

"At the expense, too, of my future and his own life."

"Precisely," said Fouché with a keen glance at the ingenuous face of the youth, feeling that here he had an ally. "It is easy for him in his age to lose a little, but for you in your youth to lose all is shameful. By the way, have you seen our Emperor yet?"

"Only once, years ago," said the Marquis with brightening face, "and I have not forgotten the joy of it. Now I shall meet him often, if my brother can keep out of jail for a few months."

"You shall see him to-night, my son. He is coming here incognito, to deal with His Eminence in person. And let me tell you, there are great things in store for the Consalvi family. His Majesty has dreams and plans for them. Have you yet seen the new Empress, or even the old?"

"Not I," said the youth with dazzled glance, for he understood the meaning of Fouché's words. "Nor do I care a straw for either. Were it not for these women and their marriages I might have reached glory long ago."

"You will reach it yet," said Fouché kindly, "but be discreet, forward, and quick to seize an opportunity."

He looked with emphasis in the direction of the Cardinal's rooms.

"Pardon the haste of my departure, but these are busy days. Au revoir."

Pierre showed him out, once more arranged the portieres, and left the Marquis to the sad and pleasant thoughts which by turns exalted and depressed him. The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts, sang the poet. Andrea Consalvi's ran back nine years to the golden day when the young Napoleon touched his cheek with the lips which had shouted victory on so many battle-fields; and now at the bidding of Fouché they ran forward to that exalted moment when a crown, even a crown, might adorn the brow of a Consalvi. It had been no secret for many a day that the Emperor looked upon the Cardinal Consalvi as the successor of Pius VII, a Pope who had too much conscience for his lofty position, and too little nerve, Napoleon thought. As partner of the Bonaparte dynasty Consalvi would have the patronage of papacy and empire, and a crown would be no more to him than to Napoleon, who had made his relatives the rulers of kingdoms. Ah, that kiss of Napoleon had bitten into the boy's soul like the fang of a serpent, and the thoughts of the Roman Marquis were all

steeped in the purple of the empire. Yet near as he might be to a crown, he was quite as near to the precipice of disaster and death. His brother, the Cardinal, did not seem to be concerned about the future. Like all diplomats he dealt purely in the present, saying: the future is God's, not man's, but the present in a sense may be called a human asset. That very day His Eminence had attended the reception to the Archduchess Marie Louise; but to-morrow he would not attend her marriage with Napoleon, because the Church still regarded Josephine as the lawful and only wife of Napoleon; and that absence would shatter the future of the Consalvis. How to change the resolve of the Cardinal! Would not Napoleon change it? Could that glorious creature fail in anything? Thus his thoughts and feelings anguished him, until the bell rang out a warning of visitors, and he went to his own room to prepare for the visit of the Emperor.

Pierre ushered two ladies into the waiting-room. After the fashion of the time long cloaks concealed their forms and small masks their faces from the public gaze. The taller lady asked if His Eminence was at home.

"No, madame," said Pierre, "he has withdrawn for the night."

"Then we dare not linger here," said the lady.

"Perhaps some official of the house can give me the information I want, and must get," her companion said rather sharply.

"Is the Marquis Consalvi at home?"

"He will be pleased to see you," said Pierre promptly.

"Please be seated. Shall I help you to remove your wraps?"

They accepted his assistance, and Pierre went off with the cloaks. The small masks they retained. The taller lady, unmasked, had the air of a woman of twenty, with more dignity and stateliness than usually goes with that age. Her blue eyes had a serious expression, some haughtiness and coldness appeared in her carriage and manner, and towards her companion she behaved as if constantly on her guard against her. The Contessa Franchi was an Italian, or rather a Roman, as they expressed it then, who held the position of maid-of-honor at the imperial court, first to Josephine and now to her who would become Empress of the French on the next day. The position described her as a member of the Italian faction, which accepted Napoleon as the ruler of Italy and hoped all things from his generous statemanship, even after he had imprisoned the Pope and taken possession of the very government of the Church. At the same time the Contessa held the regard and the friendship of Cardinal Consalvi as an old friend of the family. Her companion was no less a personage than Betsy Patterson, sprightly as ever, vivacious, daring and unconventional, but four years older than when we saw her last in the harbor of Lisbon. Her great disappointment, her grief and bitterness, had not robbed her of her womanly charms. The lines of her plump face were a trifle harder, her black eyes showed malice easily, and her language was often cynical; experience had given her balance and restraint, and the training of English society had given her distinction. Self-

willed as ever, determined, courageous, she took pleasure in shocking the more staid disposition of the Contessa Franchi, for whom the freedom of Betsy's methods was almost a crime. Otherwise Madame Patterson-Bonaparte, as she was commonly known, remained the same dashing, handsome, foolish, lovable creature of the happy days in Baltimore.

"The Marquis," she said, when Pierre had gone, "is that ingenuous youth whom your brother praises as the idol of the Roman ladies?"

"I was not aware that my brother mentioned the Marquis," said the Contessa smoothly but coldly.

"Quite often," Betsy replied, with a glint of malice in her eye, "and always as a Roman Bayard. Ah, how well do I remember the day when Ensign Jerome Bonaparte was the Bayard of Baltimore, and we were all at his feet. Oh, these Bayards of the salon! I could have staked my life on his meanest word, yet here he is to-day the husband of another woman, while I and my child are thrust aside."

"Why then do you bring up so painful a subject?"

"For the moral, of course," said Betty loftily, and the Contessa had to laugh. "Do not wager much money on the Bayards of the salon. As we say in America, don't depend on any man, until he first learns to depend on you."

"Perhaps a slight acquaintance with the Marquis would give you a better opinion of him."

"I have it already. He is charming. He entertained me once in this very room when I called to see His Eminence, that grand man whom I adore. Now, there's a Bayard, if there ever was one. The Marquis

seemed to me a bit verdant. And there is a picture of Pope Pius, the dear old man, who stood up for me against the Bonapartes."

She dropped a profound curtsy to a portrait of Pius VII which hung on the wall.

"He will win yet, Corona," she said, with a wise shake of her head, "and you had better be on the safe side. I am a Protestant, but I shall never forget the service done me by that good old man. He could have curried a lot of favor with Napoleon by just declaring my marriage a farce, and he would not."

"He could not," said the Contessa with indifference. "Your marriage in the first instance was valid. After that the Pope had no choice but to throw the Bonaparte suit out of court."

"Thank you for a real legal opinion, and send the bill to papa. I wonder if the Marquis will be able to tell me so much on the other matter."

"Please let me broach the matter," said the Contessa. "You are so abrupt, Elisabeth, that people get suspicious. I am afraid of all this masquerade."

"You have nothing to lose by it, Corona," Betsy replied sharply, "for the Empress Josephine screens you. I have risked my all on it, and I am not afraid. They who are trained in the woods fear nothing, not even your little kings, whose frowns are to you so dreadful. But have your way. Put my request in diplomatic talk. Nevertheless I shall have a little flirtation with the Marquis, and if your diplomacy fails to get the information my smiles shall earn it."

The Contessa did not answer, for at that moment the Marquis entered and came straight to her with out-

stretched hands. He did not at first see her companion, who had walked to the far end of the room to inspect a picture, but at a signal from the Contessa he lowered his voice to a whisper.

"What luck brings you here on a dull night, my beloved? I am overjoyed."

"We come, Marquis, to see the Cardinal. Pardon me. Let me give you the pleasure of meeting my friend Mrs. Lockhart of Baltimore."

"A superb woman! And a widow, I'll engage," the Marquis said to himself as he bowed to the smiling curtsy of Betsy. "I hope to be of service to a friend of Contessa Franchi."

All spoke in French. Betsy came up to him confidently in spite of an imploring glance from the Contessa.

"It is really a very simple affair," she said, "but like all simple affairs slow to come to a head. Indeed, but for our commands we really should not have troubled His Eminence. I have the honor to act on this occasion as a messenger from the Empress Josephine."

"I am honored in the message and the messenger," replied the Marquis, falling at once into the court jargon. "Commend me to Her Majesty. I salute in her the loveliest victim of a great ambition. Pray be seated."

"This is better than I thought," Betsy thought, as she took a seat. "Thanks. Our stay must be very short. The Empress has heard that many of the cardinals have resolved to absent themselves from the ceremony

to-morrow, for reasons of state. Her Majesty would like to know if this is true."

"Thirteen of the cardinals, led by my honored brother, have so decided."

"Oh, thank God," cried Betsy. "How happy that will make her . . . and me."

"I do not understand," said the Marquis, puzzled at this outburst.

"The Empress," interrupted the Contessa, "hopes at the least to go down to posterity as the true and only wife of Napoleon. If the Church will not grant a divorce to the Emperor, Josephine remains his wife. If the cardinals stay away from the marriage with Marie Louise to-morrow, it will be a sign that the Church will never consider that marriage valid."

"I see. And Mrs. Lockhart's interest in the matter?"

For a moment both ladies remained silent.

CHAPTER IX.

A WHISPER FOR A KING.

"I AM afraid to speak," said Betsy, "because I am no diplomat."

"Mrs. Lockhart represents, secretly of course, the interests of that unlucky lady who was the wife of the King of Westphalia, and to whom His Holiness and your brother have been so very kind," said the Contessa suavely.

"Now you have it in the best diplomatic phrasing, Marquis, which will enable you to understand why I am interested, no less than the Empress, in these matters."

Betsy had a fashion of saying things that suggested the good fellow to most men, and the Marquis began to smile.

"It shall be my pleasure to aid you in any way possible, Mrs. Lockhart. It cannot be much, because we are on the wrong side of politics now. Moreover I feel more like saying, a plague take these two women and their divorces. But for them I might to-day be at the head of a regiment."

"Have you the head for a regiment?" murmured Betsy, but only the Contessa heard.

"Pardon my vehemence," continued the Marquis, "but the long arm of Jerome's American wife reaches

across the sea and holds back from me honors I long for."

"Really I think we must be going," said the Contessa rising.

"Just one moment, Corona. You interest me, and Betsy Patterson had a lovely arm."

"Indeed! Of course you knew her as a townswoman. How stupid of me not to remember that. I have an idea that American women must be some sort of savage,—red skin, spiky black hair, moccasins, and wampum. And I forgot you are also an American. You say she had a beautiful arm?"

"Simply perfect," said Betsy, poising her arm deftly to his view. "Plump, pink and white, dimpled, tapering to the most delicate and rosebud fingers. Just the arm an American boy loves to pinch. I don't know about you Romans."

"Horror!" murmured the shocked Contessa.

"I understand perfectly," said the Marquis. "Tell me some more."

"If you will be good, and believe all I tell you? Well, that arm of Betsy Patterson's was as eloquent as the tongue of a poet. It could invite or repel a lover, express her rage, scorn, pride, vanity, delight, anything. On the day of her famous marriage with Bonaparte it spoke triumph, but since that day it has hung limp in this fashion."

She stood up and gave an imitation of the winning poses of the wife of Jerome, and swept across the room afterwards with a hearty laugh which died away in a hoarse cry. Her emotion got the better of her pride and she threw back the portieres and stepped

into the hall where she stood gazing out of the window for a little.

"Who is this superb creature, and how does she chance to be your friend?" the Marquis whispered to the Contessa.

"She is not my friend, and I do not think her superb," said the lady with a pretense of jealousy.

"Then she is my enemy, and while this sun of my life is near she is but one of your beauty spots. Let me tell you, violet, rose, lily, how long it has been since I saw you this morning, and how many times I have said to the air, I love her, I love her, I love her. My Corona!"

"And did you say at the same time, so long as my brother will not make peace with the Emperor, Corona will not be yours."

"You know how to chill with a word the love that burns in my heart," he replied with a show of anger. "I have not made my brother's quarrel mine, but in common decency I must stand by him."

Betsy returned to the room.

"I have just remembered," she said, "that Josephine brought good luck to Bonaparte, and that an Austrian princess helped the last King of France to his ruin."

"You might mention the historical fact to the Emperor," the Contessa said coldly, while the Marquis laughed loud and long.

"I have already mentioned it to Josephine. Cold comfort the poor lady can get out of such things. Marie Louise sits on the throne, surrounded by the glory of empire; while the discarded Empress is now no more than—"

"The empress of hearts, pitied, praised and loved by all mankind," said the Marquis with emotion.

"And a beautiful kingdom God has given her in exchange for that which Napoleon's ambition took away," said the Contessa mildly.

"They see something which I don't," Betsy said to herself, watching the passing feeling in the delicate Roman faces, "but I must not let on as to my stupidity."

The Contessa now made preparations for departure, which were interrupted by a noise in the antechamber and the hurried entrance of a stout, handsome ecclesiastic in street dress. He gave his cloak and hat to Pierre and began to talk.

"What do you think I have heard? Pardon, Mrs. Lockhart, pleased to see you here. Corona, Andrea; what do you think? The Emperor is coming here shortly to make a last appeal to our stubborn Consalvi. In person, mind. What a condescension on the part of this great, generous, lofty ruler! Who would believe it?"

"He comes because he has to come, I think," said Betsy shrewdly. "He needs the Cardinal, can't get along without him, and so he comes."

"Saucy as ever," replied the prelate, shaking his finger at her. "What ideas you Americans have of things in general! Corona, Andrea, I see already the end of our difficulties. Consalvi can no more resist the charm of Napoleon than I can. Andrea, you will yet hold the baton of a marshal in the hero's army."

"Dear brother," said Corona, "His Eminence has met the Emperor before."

"And condescension has no more effect upon him

than on a stone," the Marquis added moodily. "He admires Napoleon's genius, but he looks upon the man as a comet who must disappear very soon."

"How well I know that opinion," continued Monsignor Franchi. "How often I have combated it in vain. But then you know the Emperor has never seriously set himself to win Consalvi. Now that he is once more victorious, in the field of diplomacy, conqueror of the Austrian in this wonderful marriage with the Archduchess, he will take time for the task of convincing this stubborn Cardinal. And where we have failed, the great conqueror, the builder of universal empire, the dream-hero of sublime Dante, will succeed."

"Well, all this makes necessary our flight, Elisabeth," said the Contessa.

"Very true, Elisabeth," repeated her brother. "You must not be found here on a night of crisis."

"I rather think I shall remain," Betsy replied. "I would like to have a decent chat with Napoleon. This seeing him afar off, in the midst of splendor, as in a show at the theatre, is not satisfying. And as his sist . . . his sister-in-law's representative, I ought really have a private interview. Why not here?"

"Always impudent and rash and charming," said Monsignor Franchi, whom this proposal highly amused. "I really believe you would thus affront the King of Spain, or any other absolute monarch."

"But let us be going," said impatient Corona.

"I forgot to mention another thing," said Monsignor. "The Emperor will be accompanied by His Highness King Jerome, for the reason—"

"King Jerome!" cried Betsy with eyes ablaze. "Then my opportunity has come at last. Here I shall stay until I deliver the message from his Baltimore wife. It would be a sin to miss the opportunity."

The others stared at her in astonishment and horror.

"And my fate if you should be discovered?" said Corona.

"Josephine will protect you."

"And the Cardinal?"

"I have determined to face King Jerome on this spot."

"Wonderful spirit, but very foolish, my dear lady," said Monsignor with an indulgent smile. "You could accomplish nothing, except get into jail in five minutes."

"Which is a good deal," she retorted.

"American to the marrow," continued the Monsignor with admiration. "But do not forget that you are aiming at a long interview with His Highness, and that a mere personal introduction, a cold look from the King, and a speedy trip to the prison, are not what you desire. How many times I have told you that diplomacy alone, which you despise, will achieve your aims."

"I know that diplomacy takes the heart out of me, it is so reasonable in utterance. Well, if I must I must. . . ."

"Hasten, then, or we shall be caught by the visitors," said Corona.

Pierre brought their cloaks, and at the same moment the bell rang. Corona started with fright.

"These two face to face! I shall die of fright, brother," she said.

"One moment," said Monsignor. "It may be well to avoid meeting the imperial princes if they have arrived. Marquis, conduct the ladies to the nearest room, until Napoleon has joined the Cardinal. Then they may pass out easily."

It was too late. Corona hastening to the door came face to face with the Emperor. A sudden hush fell on the room. The sallow, wonderful face of Napoleon lit up at sight of the Contessa, and he pinched her soft cheek.

"How is it I always meet you where you should be, dear lady? Here you are no doubt doing a good work with these stubborn Romans. How is the affair proceeding?"

"Badly, Sire, except with the Marquis, who loves you."

"Keep at it, my child. These Italian roses will win the day. And who is your hooded friend?"

For Betty had grown repentant and had suddenly made up her mind to avoid complications for Corona's sake. She had put on her mask and drawn down her hood, and stood afar trembling with emotion. King Jerome had delayed in the hall, but he had entered at last, bowed coldly to the others, and now stood with his back to the room, studying a portrait of Pius VII over the mantel, not fifteen feet distant. They had not stood so near since the parting of the ship in the port of Lisbon, altho she had seen him many times in the distance. Rage and grief and bitterness divided her heart. How she would have liked to burst upon them all that moment, and pour out upon both Bonapartes her contempt and scorn. It would

not do, only make her ridiculous, for they had the power and she the weakness. Diplomacy alone, as Monsignor Franchi had observed, could serve her; and that grief, which at times invaded her soul and turned her into jelly, must now, of all times, be suppressed. If Jerome was cold and hard she must be colder still. So, when the greatest man of his day spoke of her, and Corona hesitated what answer to make, she came forward and spoke sweetly in a low voice, impossible for Jerome to hear.

"An American friend, Sire, Mrs. Lockhart of Baltimore."

Napoleon liked the voice, the modest and shy manner, and gave her his hand which she kissed. He kept her hand in his own and patted it kindly as he spoke. She pushed back her hood that he might see her face.

"I have little reason to think well of your townspeople, Madam. One of them made a pretty mess for me."

"Sire, our women cannot prevent the effect of their own charms any more than gallant Frenchmen can control their own hearts. More than one wooer cursed the luck of the French ensign."

"Then you knew the dame who captured King Jerome? A brazen amazon, was she not?"

"We were convinced that she married a Bonaparte from a desire to lead a regiment in your army."

"Thank heaven we escaped her. Your business in Paris, my child?"

"Just pleasure, Sire, and then to be able to say to my friends: I saw the Emperor."

"Naturally. And then I suppose," he added musingly, as if the thought had not occurred to him before, "Americans have their opinion of me. Assuredly I gave them a great start in the race with England for the future crown. Yes, they must have their opinion of me."

"If flattery could reach Your Majesty," she said so shyly that the great man laughed, "it would be flattery to speak it."

"Ah, you are already a courtier, child. Well, I am curious to know, and you have my permission to speak."

"Americans admire the Emperor," said Betty in her most purring voice, "because he has so forcibly reminded the kings of the world of their origin. The power which made them unmakes them."

"How American!" exclaimed Napoleon, concealing his astonishment, but he pinched her cheek and turned her face to the light, regarding it with interest. "The wilderness breeds the original, the forcible. Well, thank God you have still your youth, my child, and the freedom of your wild country."

She kissed his hand again in farewell, drew down her hood, and turned to the Contessa, who waited in mortal terror for the end of the brief interview. No one could tell what whim would banish Betty's noblest resolves and bring on a catastrophe. Monsignor Franchi could just conceal his anxiety. Yet nothing happened, because Betty had determined not to expose her friends by any imprudence. At the same time she had made up her mind to have the long-promised interview with Jerome that very hour, with as little

danger to the Franchis as possible. She found it impossible to resist the impulse. After waiting five years for what had proved to be a practical impossibility, such an opportunity was not lightly to be thrown aside. Only fifteen feet away from him and to be silent, unrevealed! It was horrible! Her mind had swiftly considered the chances. The Emperor would be closeted with the Cardinal, King Jerome would be entertained by Monsignor Franchi, and the Marquis would conduct the Contessa and herself to the carriage, perhaps accompany them home. She must escape somewhere between the door and the carriage, and hide in the rooms anywhere. A bribe to Pierre would make it impossible to find her until she had seen Jerome. Napoleon had taken a step forward towards Jerome, when he stopped to consider something. The ladies bowed to royalty, which now had its back towards them; Pierre shoved back the portieres, and the Marquis stepped forward to conduct them to their carriage; the Contessa turned her face to the street and did not look back; the Marquis followed her, supposing that Betty was close behind. Betty made a signal to Pierre to wait, then passed swiftly and unseen close to her husband, and whispered in his ear:

“Have you forgotten Elisabeth?”

No other heard the words. The King kept his attitude long enough to permit Betty to escape to the protection of the portieres, which Pierre dropped quickly behind her. Through them she watched the King. The meaning of the whisper did not reach him with its utterance. When it did he turned as if struck and looked around. The portieres still flut-

tered in spite of Pierre's steadying hand, and he knew that the mystery concealed itself there. Betty's tears fell fast, as she noted the expression of his face, its sudden sadness as well as astonishment.

"He has a heart yet, rare as such a thing is in a court," she said. Then to Pierre as she placed a coin in his ready hand. "Give me a room where I may hide while the Emperor is here, and say to the Contessa that I followed her out."

Pierre knew his business without minute instruction, and Betty found herself nicely located for the business of the evening.

CHAPTER X.

THE LITTLEST AND LATEST KING.

THE Marquis returned in a moment with inquiries for Madame Bonaparte, which were met by Pierre's precise statement that the lady had followed him to the carriage. He could with difficulty believe that, and reentered the salon for a moment, just as Napoleon raised his eyes from a brown study and observed him.

"Here's a bird that I must snare," he said to Jerome. "Flatter him. Is this the Marquis Consalvi? I thought so. I recall that afternoon when your brother brought you to the reception at the Louvre."

"Your Majesty is more than kind," said Andrea as he kissed the imperial hand. "That day is the brightest of my life."

"King Jerome, here is a fine boy that you should know, altho you have met him already. The brother of His Eminence Consalvi."

"Whom I led into trouble that same day in the Louvre," said the King pleasantly, as Andrea kissed his hand. "You are now of the army, Marquis?"

"Of the Pope's army naturally," said Napoleon. "But with the consent of the Pope and the Cardinal, I now offer you, Marquis, a career at my side. Here is the gate of glory. I open it to you."

"You are welcome to the best my court and heart can offer at any time," said King Jerome, and both monarchs stood holding the young fellow's hands and smiling on him as an equal, for in him lay the making of a future king. It was not astonishing that Andrea grew pale.

"Your Majesty, Your Highness," he said with shaking voice, "such favor is entirely undeserved, and makes the head dizzy. With all my heart I thank you. I'll lay the matter before His Eminence."

"Who will make matter of it in no time," said Napoleon smiling. "But we shall use our influence in your behalf. Now, Monsignor Franchi, we are ready for His Eminence."

"He does not know of the presence of the Emperor and the King," the prelate said with immense satisfaction. "Let me lead you to his apartments."

They all went out together, leaving Pierre to rearrange the apartment, while he planned to secure for Betty the pleasure of an interview with the King of Westphalia. Meanwhile the lady sat in the small room, locked in, Corona sat in her carriage waiting, and the Marquis forgot for the moment the search for Betty. After five years her opportunity had come. Five years! She had been in the galleys all that time, chained to her grief, silent in solitude, for no word ever came from Jerome, and to the world she made no complaint. Napoleon had shut every port against her, and his spies had successfully thwarted her attempts to reach Jerome in person. That she had beaten them at last was due to powerful friends. The Empress Josephine had secretly taken her into favor

and given her a refuge, and the friends of Josephine at court had undertaken to bring about a meeting with her husband. Diplomacy was too slow for Betty, who now took the reins in her hands, determined to have her long-sought interview. What did she expect from it? She hardly knew. Her lover had not only become a king, but also the husband of a princess of Würtemberg. The senate of France had declared her marriage null under French law, and her little son could not inherit from his father or his father's relatives. Her consolation was that the papal court had declared her marriage with Jerome valid. The Church to which the Bonapartes belonged had made that declaration in the face of Napoleon's threats and bribes. Pope Pius VII had refused to go back of that declaration. The Senate of France indeed! It had just been turned out of the Bonaparte furniture factory. The dynasty of Bonaparte dated back six years. Caroline of Würtemberg was welcome to such backing, and to her kingdom of Westphalia; but she, the Baltimore girl, had for her support the Church of seventeen centuries, the Pope, a monarch whose successors dated back to the Roman emperors, to Peter the Fisherman, and this Cardinal, who could not be bought with a crown. At the worst, should all her efforts fail, history would defend her rights as a wife, history which lives when empires become dust. Yet she wept behind her mask and her hood, as she sat alone in the locked room, so near to her king, so far from him. Presently the door opened, and Fouché entered. Altho she did not know him alarm kept her silent and on her guard. He bowed politely.

"Pardon me. Am I addressing a relative of the Cardinal?"

"Only an admirer and a visitor, Mrs. Lockhart of Baltimore."

"Thank you, madam. May I give you a passing word of advice? Do not speak too loudly to the King of Westphalia. It is said a cat may look at a king, and I suppose an American may jest at him, but always from a safe and proper distance. Kings are sensitive."

"Your right, sir, to bestow on me this advice?"

"As minister of police, charged with the care of kings."

"Fouché!"

"Duke of Otranto, at your service."

"I accept the advice of your Grace thankfully," she said with a curtsy of great depth and precision, altho her heart beat painfully and her nerves seemed unstrung. Her opportunity had gone and the prison opened before her. She had walked into the trap of her natural enemies, because she had rejected the sound advice of her friends. Fouché recognized her nerve, and knew that she had already begun to plan for escape, so he added:

"I could hardly expect less courtesy from Madame Patterson-Bonaparte."

"Thank you."

"By this time to-morrow you should be well on your way to the frontier," he continued. "I take the liberty of disregarding the instructions of the Emperor, because I sympathize with you. You shall not go to jail."

"I thank you again, Excellency," she said, her courage returning at the kindness of the Minister. "At the same time, unless you force me, I shall not leave France. Oh if I might beg a favor of you . . . you who are so powerful that kings supplicate you . . . to see him, to speak with him; after daring and suffering so much I cannot leave without seeing him—"

Her voice faded into half-stifled sobs and she gave way in spite of her will to tears. The smooth, plump mask which was known as the face of Fouché regarded the woman with official interest, but without feeling, and yet her innocent phrase touching his power, uttered without flattery, caught the knave in his weakest point. Clearly she came from people who appreciated his real power.

"You still cherish hope, then," he said as if astonished. "You do not surrender Jerome to the German princess. I am amazed. Have you not the sense to know that this weak man will not play the traitor twice? He suffered too much in deserting you."

"If I could but speak with him," she pleaded, "tell him of the years that have been blank without him, tell him of our child."

"Your hope deceives you, madame," replied Fouché, shaking his head sadly at her folly. "Nevertheless you shall see him."

"Oh, Excellency!" and the great man felt a warmth about his heart at the gratitude and joy of her cry, but he silenced her with a gesture.

"You shall see him and hear him, Madame, but he will tell you that your child is fatherless, you an out-cast, and that your proper place is a jail."

"I care not. I can die after that, but I know that Jerome will never speak such words."

"I must place conditions on you, madame. Put on your mask and your hood, give me your word of honor that you will not reveal your identity to the King."

"But that condition," she began—

"Without it, nothing. I must protect myself, the Cardinal, the King, from a scene. A clever woman needs not to be told that masks do not hide hearts."

"I promise then."

"And to-morrow you set out for the frontier?"

"I wish it were for the grave. To-morrow I shall delay a few hours, to bid farewell to friends, and then depart for Belgium."

"Await here the coming of King Jerome, and remember your promise. I shall not easily forget the charm of this meeting," said Fouché bowing.

"A thousand thanks for your great kindness, Excellency," said Betty as she curtseyed to the floor. Even though accustomed to getting whatever she asked, she felt a lively gratitude to the Minister of Police for an unexpected favor. She could not credit an official of his stamp and reputation with a heart, yet he had shown it to her, the stranger; and she recalled in consequence the many surprises of her life, when the surface gave the lie to the depths. This iron-faced Minister of Police gives her the interview which the blooming and benevolent King of Westphalia denies. And now to prepare herself for the visit of Jerome, for which since her entry into France she had often rehearsed; but like all rehearsals the actual scene wiped out stilted speeches and striking tableaux. She had

to play the part of Mrs. Lockhart, however, and keep to her disguise. Jerome would surely discover the poor trick, and then what would happen? Poor Betty, with her deep love and hopeful nature, not to mention her lively imagination, could not see that with King Jerome the obvious and proper was the only thing that could be permitted to happen. His entrance was casual, betraying no sign of expectancy. He had not played the part of a transient king in vain. The mask of his face showed no more knowledge and feeling than her own. She did not curtsy, but in a bitter voice said at once, as if assaulting his pride:

"Have you forgotten Elisabeth?"

"Madame," he replied suavely and coldly, "for the second time you have permitted yourself to forget that you address a king."

"In Baltimore," she replied as suavely, "we remember only that Bonaparte who swore eternal fidelity to Elisabeth Patterson. Do perjurers become kings so easily?"

"Who are you, and what do you want, madame?"

"The agent of your wife, her one friend, excepting perhaps the Pope and this brave Cardinal who defies the entreaties of Napoleon and you."

"Be brief, then, since you have a message, I suppose. What does this woman Patterson ask of me?"

"Her rights as a wife. No more than that. You loved her once, I believe."

"And several others besides," the King said lightly, answering her tone. "The time of youth is the time of love, as most people know by experience. My youth was impetuous. However," and he paused a moment

to give emphasis to this declaration, "for the benefit of the lady whom you have the great honor to represent, I say to you solemnly that the King of Westphalia forgot her existence from the day the Senate of France annulled the Baltimore marriage; I say to you that he is henceforth devoted to his lawful wife, Queen Caroline; I say to you that the American episode is only a dream of his foolish youth."

The very marrow melted in Betty's bones at these calm, judicial, terrible phrases. Surely he did not know to whom he was speaking? She would find that out on the spot.

"Ah, what terrible words," she said in a broken voice. "Your Majesty, such language, from you, condemns her to death."

"She must have guessed it long ago, madame, and she has lived full five years since our pretty amour."

"But such years, Your Majesty, such awful years! So full of desperate, maddening torment. You who loved her once would pity her to see her now. She has kept a brave face for the world. She has defended you against all aspersion. But for the hope of seeing you again, and the certainty that you loved her still, she would have died mad years ago. Ah, what would she not give for this moment and its privileges, to speak to you face to face, to touch your hand as I do, to kiss it, to bathe it with her tears, and after such bliss to die."

She suited the action to the word before the King could hinder, and it was now the turn of the soft-hearted Jerome to melt with anguish. It required all his resolution to keep cold and steady, to refrain from

catching her in his arms, and indulging for a moment in that wild affection which he had felt for her. The thought that Fouché or Pierre stood not far off steadied him, and he was able to say coldly:

"Madame, oblige me by giving her the message I confide to you."

"Sire, if you ever loved her," pleaded Betty on her knees, "send her some happier word. You . . . you . . . even if your brother was her judge . . . you should not be her executioner."

"It is true mercy to kill her hope, even if the message kills her," he replied, but his heart failed him.

"And her child?"

"His mother rejected all my offers to provide for him. I would like to give him his proper rank and honors on my side, if only to atone for the misfortune of having brought him into the world."

"And this is your last message to Elisabeth?" she said rising. He knew her well, for to a strange woman he would have spoken with the feelings of a man. He was the judge sentencing her to death, and he had to lay aside all emotion, concealing it under the forms of speech.

"My last message," he repeated.

"I shall repeat it to her. Permit me to thank Your Majesty for the honor and favor of this interview, which will at least clear the air for my employer. I may tell you that Madame Bonaparte will never permit you to see your son. If she survives her hope and her illusion, she will teach him to hate and despise his father. I can assure you on my own part, Sire,

of the scorn and contempt of all America for the littlest as well as the latest king in Europe."

Whereupon she made the profound curtsey which she could not make before. Fire burned in her veins, the fire of rage, which extinguished all other emotion, and helped her to self-command, and to keeping her word to Fouché. The last words of his wife completed the ruin of the King's self-command. He had not a large supply of it, and the assault of Betty on his heart had broken the mask of royalty which custom obliged him to wear. Her final description of his political position was so apt and so like her, that he had difficulty to keep from laughing. How often had the enemy thus described his ridiculous position, and why should he not accept the truth from her who knew him as no other? But Fouché was probably looking at him from some corner, and it would not do to change his manner, or give any hint of what was going on in his mind. So he replied grandly and coldly:

"Kings are familiar with scorn and contempt even in Europe, and therefore are not surprised at America which professes to do without Kings. Madame, I assure you that in this interview I have simply desired to acquaint Madame Patterson with the actual position, and I bear no ill will towards her. I thank you for giving me a fine opportunity, and trust that we shall meet again."

He extended his hand and she could not help but take it, so kind was his manner, so winning his smile; and while she knelt at his feet these words fell like heavenly dew on her astonished ears:

"And the next time you wish to see me come in

person. Be on your guard. Fouché is watching and listening. Farewell. We shall meet again."

She rose as in a dream, curtsied formally as he withdrew, and sank into a chair quite overcome with contending feelings. What was she to believe in this bewildering place? When calmness returned a peace settled on her soul such as she had not known for five long years. Jerome had not forgotten and deserted her. Her instinct had been true. Had she flown to him at the very first, instead of waiting for nobles to prepare a way, timid nobles who trembled at every wind, her sorrows would have been few. They would meet again! Oh, what rapture filled her as she sat motionless in hood and mask, a perfect figure of hopeless grief and eternal desolation, Fouché thought, as he looked at her from a concealed window in the cornice of the room. Something like pity touched the heart of the Minister of Police.

CHAPTER XI.

A DUEL.

MEANWHILE a lively scene had been taking place in the room of the Cardinal Consalvi. The two princes had met, the prince of the earth and the prince of the Church, and the contact had warmed matters in their vicinity. Only the Marquis felt the romance of the scene, and based hopes of the future on its outcome. King Jerome was tired of scenes, and not interested in churchmen; Fouché simply wondered if the little Emperor could win; Monsignor Franchi, whose career hung on the success of this and similar enterprises, prayed fervently for a safe ending; Napoleon himself had little doubt as to the result. Success had filled him with confidence as rich food fills a body with fat, and he had become incapable of measuring Consalvi's full stature. The Emperor meant to make this Cardinal pope in succession to Pius VII. Already Napoleon had become half a sceptic. He had also forgotten that greatness in statecraft and war does not free a man from his littlenesses, against which one must always be on guard. Imperial power and wondrous success had not yet taught him to read the mind and heart of such a man as Consalvi, but he thought the power had been conferred

on him. As a diplomat, able to read the signs of the times, the Cardinal had reached a conclusion on Napoleon, and had taken his stand accordingly. The Bonapartes were the comets of the political system, sure to go as roughly and unexpectedly as they came. As a Catholic churchman he held another opinion. Napoleon had laid hands on the Church, and his fate as a sacrilegious spoliator was only a question of time. Consalvi had done his best to avert the final catastrophe, the breaking up of the papal administration. Having failed, and been fixed in exile in Paris, there was nothing for him to do but wait for the second catastrophe, the fall of the Bonapartes. It seemed a long ways off, on the eve of the Emperor's marriage with a princess of the house of Austria. Pierre announced the presence of Napoleon. Consalvi came forward to greet him. They had not met in nine years. Time had aged Consalvi, but the calm face had not lost its expression and sweetness. The soul within was in perfect peace.

"Welcome to France," said Napoleon as cheerfully as if he had nothing to do with the exile of the Sacred College. "Since I last saw Your Eminence, you have grown white and thin."

"Success has kept Your Majesty vigorous and youthful. We poor failures lose health and spirit with our failing fortunes," replied His Eminence, and he bowed to King Jerome.

"His tongue has the fine clerical edge anyway," Jerome thought.

"Do not speak of failure," cried Napoleon. "Here at the center of the world your career of glory is

but beginning. I regret the blunder which retired you from office. Had you remained the Pope's first minister, all my plans for the glory of Church and Empire would now be in full bloom."

"Undoubtedly," echoed Monsignor Franchi, but the Cardinal did not like the insinuation that his plans harmonized with Napoleon's policy, so he declined the implied compliment coldly.

"Had I remained the Pope's first minister," he said, "I would have done my duty."

"My agents deceived me," the Emperor went on, "and how could I know then the imbecility of Pius, who has no other will than that of his latest adviser? Had you remained at his ear, at the least we should have had a pope of brains and will, able and willing to support the Emperor."

"I would have done my duty and no more," repeated Consalvi.

"Duty!" said Napoleon with a dry laugh. "Duty to whom? Your successor did his duty, and with what result? The Pope is in France, the cardinals are here in Paris, and the Empire owns the Church. Would duty have led you into so deep a ditch?"

"Impossible!" murmured Monsignor Franchi.

"I would have done my duty," Consalvi repeated more coldly.

"Bah! you are all in the ditch together," and the Emperor snapped his fingers angrily.

"Which is due," replied the even voice of His Eminence, "less to our stumbling than to the imperial bayonets."

Monsignor Franchi raised his hands with a gesture

of horror. The Emperor felt the hardness of the Cardinal's present temper, and thought it safer to change the tone of the interview. He waved the others to the far end of the room so as to be alone with Consalvi.

"I am going to end all our troubles at one stroke," he said with his most piercing glance at the Cardinal, "if I can get the proper man to support me. A strong pope, as strong as you are, throned in Avignon, and myself in Paris, would make a combination fit to rule the world."

"An ancient dream, Sire, in which you yourself do not believe. If the Church is so powerful that it must be an associate, why should it not contest dominion with you?"

"A dream!" exclaimed Napoleon excitedly. "Consider, Eminence: is not the old order going to pieces? Must not the new spring from its ruins? Must not the new world have its regent and its priest? The one to shape its laws, the other to erect its temples? Well then, since you admit so much, is it not clear that you and I stand at the very doors of a great opportunity? Shall we not seize it, and help fashion the old world into its new shape? Oh, Consalvi, is there not one spark of divine fire in your heart, to kindle a blaze which may light the world for ages?"

He had shouted these questions as he walked about the apartment, and Consalvi wondered at the strength of his passion for world-power.

"It is a sublime dream, but impossible," he answered.

"And why impossible?"

"Because its achievement would mean great wrongs

upon mankind, and injustice does not, and can not, breed great empires."

"The answer of the priest," said Napoleon with scorn.

"God grant it may always be the answer of the priest," the Cardinal replied warmly, "altho I spoke from the point of view of statecraft. Such a scheme would mean death to millions, and disaster to many nations. There has been one conquest of the earth since Augustus, but in my humble opinion it renders universal despotism impossible—forever. No man, whatever be his genius, no group of men, whatever be their strength, can ever again bring the nations under the despotism of a new Caesar, though he proved kinder than a father. There is henceforth but one universal ruler,—Christ."

"Always the priest," said the Emperor impatiently. "My God, shall I ever find a kindred spirit to second my plans of empire? Must I walk the road alone?"

"Your brother, King Jerome," suggested His Eminence politely. Napoleon looked about him, but King Jerome was just then engaged with his wife.

"The man of two wives and half a brain," scoffed the Emperor.

"Even your Majesty has not yet conquered Europe," continued the Cardinal. "England and Russia remain aloof and unconquered."

"There is time yet," said Napoleon quietly, and he resumed his seat. He had exalted his victim, bribed him temptingly, and he now proceeded to test the effect of bribe and exaltation, altho Consalvi had not yielded an inch to him.

"While I wait the Pope annoys me with his pettish denials of this, that, and the other, small things, but they hamper diplomacy. Jerome is a true son of the Church, yet Pius will not free him from his marriage with a Protestant savage in Baltimore."

"It is out of his power, Sire. If a marriage be valid, there is no power on earth, within or without the Church, capable of dissolving it."

"I broke it as I broke my own. I did not ask the Pope to divorce me, but ignored him, and so fared better than Jerome. Behold the result: the whole Church will be present at my nuptials to-morrow."

"The Pope will not," said Consalvi curtly, and a flush covered the pallid face of Napoleon. The thrust caught him unawares.

"His cardinals and bishops will bless what he would curse if I gave him the chance."

"The Pope never curses," said Consalvi promptly, "and in this case you gave His Holiness no opportunity to interfere with curse or blessing. And there you will find the weak point later, when an enemy desires to injure you."

"Yes, yes, I know. Churchmen will find that weak point, of course. They who should be first to support me will be first to fight me. And after all that I have done? Did I not set up the Church again in France, in the world?"

"Undoubtedly, a favor which no Catholic can ever forget. But having set it up, you have proceeded to make it part of your universal program, and you stand to-day in the shoes of Henry IV of Germany and

Henry VIII of England. They are dead, and the Church still lives."

"Thank you, Eminence, but I do not need the hint. I am not tempted to imitate the two Henrys mentioned. My greatest support must be the Church, which shall one day bury me and watch over my grave when France has forgotten my glory. But the churchmen are not the Church. The group at its head to-day are not men of affairs. Ah, Consalvi, pardon my criticisms. But I long for the day when you shall be pope at Avignon."

"And I had rather be a dead pope in Rome than a live one at Avignon," answered the Cardinal smilingly.

"You shall be both in time, no doubt," said the enraged Emperor, while Monsignor Franchi began to sweat in a far corner. "Meanwhile, you must grant me a few favors. This young brother of yours deserves attention. He is not a priest. Give him to me for France and glory."

"Thanks, Sire, but under present conditions the honor must be declined."

"What! you deny him and me this favor! I know why, but I shall say nothing. Then grant me your support in the matter of Jerome's marriage. You are a diplomat, and you understand the situation."

"If the matter is ever opened again, I shall be happy to do what I may in bringing the affair to its proper issue."

"Why is it that you churchmen take so little interest in the welfare of the Church?" asked the Emperor bitterly. "You never seem to feel the weight of responsibility, which leads men of experience to compromise, to the surrender of minor things, to the harmonizing of

conflicting interests. To deal with you is like dealing with the English, whose motto is: all or nothing."

"And is not your responsibility even heavier than theirs?" Consalvi answered. "You have made us helpless, forcibly exiled us, disrupted the governmental machinery of the Church, and then you complain of our helplessness and charge us with lack of interest, of a sense of responsibility."

Altho these words were uttered mildly and with indifference, the Emperor permitted his anger to blaze suddenly.

"Upon my word, Consalvi," he said loudly, "I sometimes think you are not a diplomat, but a fool."

"We are all human, God mend us," replied His Eminence with a smile.

Napoleon began again to stride about the room.

"An Emperor sues, where he might command, for what is his by right, and Your Eminence has nothing but denials," he complained. "I offer your brother the baton of a marshal: you refuse it. I offer you the support of France to make you Pope: you ridicule me. I ask your aid to relieve the Empire from the danger of these incomplete divorces: you decline. Is this obstinacy, spite, or hatred?"

"It is, I fear, whatever Your Imperial Majesty will decide to call it," said the Cardinal.

"Ah, you have nothing to say! You will not lift a finger to aid France or me in time of danger! You, a pensioner of the Empire!"

"Not I, Sire! With all respect, into my palm has never fallen one penny of your pension. I have never served God or man for money. I have never been and

never shall be in the service of France. What is more, Sire," and the Cardinal rose as if to give emphasis to his words, "no man will ever be able to say with truth that I took the pay of a conqueror of Rome."

"Pooh, pooh! You are of the same breed as the old woman Pius at Savona, unmannerly and ungrateful. I see now it was a blessing which drove you out of office. Well, remember that you are now in my displeasure. Perhaps a night's sleep will give you another feeling. I look to see you at my marriage to-morrow quite restored to your senses."

There seemed nothing more to say under the circumstances. Napoleon appeared to be in a towering rage, the Cardinal remained silent, and Monsignor Franchi with the Marquis stood appalled at the outcome of the interview. As the Emperor turned to go without having achieved a definite understanding of any kind Monsignor Franchi made a suggestion.

"And if His Eminence, Sire, would use his influence to prevent certain cardinals from absenting themselves from the august ceremony . . ."

"What are you saying, Franchi?" shouted the Emperor. "That prelate does not exist who would thus dare to cast doubt on my marriage with Marie Louise. He would find no hiding-place from my vengeance."

"Vengeance!" exclaimed the Monsignor and the Marquis together. At that moment Jerome returned, Fouché followed him, and the Emperor with a curt nod to the Cardinal went out. In the salon he took the Marquis by the arm and whispered:

"Fear nothing, but be faithful. We shall win your brother yet."

They all disappeared hastily, ushered out by Pierre, and the aggrieved Cardinal joined the others in the salon. The last words of the Emperor cheered the Marquis, but Monsignor Franchi was in a state of desolation.

"Oh, Eminence," he groaned, "why treat with such disdain the honor done you by the greatest man on earth, the most powerful monarch, the invincible, who ordains you as his partner in glory?"

"Why on the other hand, dear Franchi, do you expose His Majesty to such disdain?" replied the Cardinal good-humoredly.

"But you heard him, Eminence," said the Marquis astonished.

"Fine acting, Andrea . . . the offer of the tiara . . . the appeal in your behalf . . . and he knows I can do nothing in those wretched divorces . . . acting to one end: to get me to the marriage."

"But his vengeance means death, dear brother."

"Death is a trifle. I was thinking of you. It is hard to lose so much."

"And is there really no hope? Could you not attend the marriage?"

"No hope. Here it is a case of what God hath joined together Napoleon is not able to put asunder. The first marriages of the Bonapartes stand."

"Thank God!" said a fervent voice which startled everyone. Betty stood with radiant face in the ante-chamber, smiling at the Marquis, who beckoned her forward. At the same moment Pierre ushered in the Contessa, weary with waiting in the carriage outside. The ladies knelt before His Eminence and kissed his hand, while the Marquis uttered the words of introduction for Betty.

CHAPTER XII.

AN AMERICAN LADY.

"AH, Baltimore!" exclaimed His Eminence. "I had the pleasure many years ago of meeting the bishop of that city. By the way, he is now an Archbishop."

"I know Dr. Carroll very well. He married me," said Betty, forgetful of her role as agent for Madame Bonaparte.

"Married you, indeed! Then you are also a Catholic?"

"No, but my husband is," she answered, biting her lip, with a sharp look at the indignant Contessa. "I am a Protestant."

The Cardinal did not seem to notice her confusion, but motioned her to a seat, as if ready for a conversation. Her introduction and the presence of an archbishop at her marriage assured him that she must be a person of consequence.

"You come from a wonderful country, Madame Lockhart, made more so by Napoleon's gift of a great territory, Louisiana. And perhaps in your time, altho you are young, you may have had the honor of seeing your great leader, Washington?"

"And of being kissed by him, Eminence, on this very spot," and she put her finger on the left dimple of her charming face.

"And did he look, fortunate girl, as we have pictured him over here, like a hero of the wilderness, the vast

unknown beyond the Atlantic, tall, stately, dark, and strong? like one of the ancient gods come down from Olympus?"

"Very much like that," said Betty. "I was only a child of ten, but recall clearly that impression of strength. To me he seemed the beautiful man, for he was a beautiful man to look at, with his sword and a black velvet suit, and such white ruffles. His face looked to me like marble, and his eyes seemed to pierce through you like fire."

"He should have been king of America," said His Eminence thoughtfully. "That immense continent will never get into shape without absolute mastery. Napoleon would rule such a continent wonderfully, and Washington much better, with a crown and absolute power."

"It will be long before we have kings in America, Eminence. You do not seem to get along very well with them over here," she added shyly.

"Oh, they are human," he replied with a laugh, "and get into trouble, or make trouble like the human, for which they pay dearly like Louis XVI. But the people are children in the main, and they must have powerful leaders, both to save them from disaster, and to direct their energies into the right channels."

"But these leaders need not be kings. We have done very well without kings so far."

"So far! precisely. That is what I have just said. When the wilderness is gone, and millions of people inhabit your great territory, one strong mind must rule them, one strong arm restrain and guide them. See how close the wilderness is to Europe," he said to

all the others about him, "when this lady from Baltimore brings to me the case of Madame Patterson-Bonaparte. For what purpose do you represent this lady here, Madame Lockhart?"

"She is forbidden to enter French territory, and I have been chosen to appeal to her husband in her place, Eminence."

"I see. It was a very imprudent match for the poor girl. The wilderness should not mate with European royalty, for one must absorb the other, and neither is quite willing to be absorbed, I fancy. At the same time, since King Jerome has married a princess of Würtemberg, I cannot see what the poor woman expects from an appeal to a husband who has rejected the wilderness and may yet be an emperor."

"A point we have often impressed on Madame Lockhart," said Franchi.

"But how can she give up, Eminence? Hope never leaves the heart, and is she not the lawful wife of King Jerome?" said Betty with spirit.

"She is indeed, my dear lady. Her marriage was carefully examined in Rome, and no flaw found in it. Archbishop Carroll had observed all the forms most carefully, and nullity could not be proved. She should be most grateful to that Baltimore prelate," and the Cardinal smiled, recalling the distress of Monsignor Franchi at the failure of Jerome to get a decree of nullity.

"She must be grateful," the Contessa remarked mildly.

"Yet of what avail has it been?" Betty complained.

"Like the Empress Josephine she is shut out from her rights, and the world laughs at her."

"The world always laughs at failure," said His Eminence, "but the world passes away, and the truth remains. Madame Bonaparte has the great Church behind her, and history will give her the position which King Jerome has denied."

"Not King Jerome, but the Emperor," said Betty with flushed cheek.

"I beg your pardon, precisely. The Emperor is to blame. Had the Baltimore lady any children?"

"One, a boy," said his mother with a sudden shaking of the voice. The Cardinal looked at her kindly, and then at the others.

"His mother should be at home caring for him," he said with meaning. "Ah, Madame Bonaparte, you do not carry your disguise well enough for dangerous France. How have you escaped so long?"

Dead silence, the silence of consternation, fell upon the apartment. Betty recovered her nerve on the instant.

"I have enjoyed the protection of the Empress Josephine," she said, "but I fear, as Your Eminence has observed, that my disguise is imperfect. Fouché discovered me to-night."

"Fouché!" cried the Contessa, and the others repeated the dread name.

"Oh, he was amiable, most amiable, like His Eminence," said Betty. "What do you think? Altho he ordered me to leave France within the week, and I promised to depart, still he secured for me an interview with Jerome."

"Fouché!" all cried again.

"He has a heart, or something, it would seem. Yes, I saw Jerome. I was masked, and we were not supposed to know each other. It was a warm interview. More than once I became personal, but I kept my word to remain masked. At the last Jerome gave me hope, urged me to visit him secretly and soon. I am not altogether lost and desolate as before."

She cast a look of triumph at the Contessa, who could not withhold her admiration for this daring and successful young woman. What influence at court could not achieve, the influence of Josephine and the Franchis, the lone creature had won by her simple audacity. Astonishing incidents: Fouché had befriended her, Jerome had yielded to her power.

"Nevertheless," said Monsignor Franchi, the diplomat, "disaster threatens now from all sides. Fouché knows."

"I am pleased to see that America can play its own game," said His Eminence, glancing at the Monsignor, for whose diplomatic ability he had no regard. "You have done very well in my house, Madame."

"If you will pardon me, Your Eminence has always been my lucky star," said Betty, delighted at his approval. "I am most grateful to you all for your very great service and kindness. Now I am on my own feet. I shall be able to carry out my plans without compromising anyone. Jerome will protect me."

"Still I have a word of advice for you, my dear lady, if you will accept it. If you are to remain in France, supported by that hope which brought you here, bear in mind that you are always in danger.

Not merely from Fouché, but from the situation. Is there any place more dangerous than a court, Monsignor Franchi?"

"None," said the prelate sadly.

"Ambition robbed you of King Jerome," went on the Cardinal. "The same ambition holds you in the zone of danger. Nay, do not protest. If you are not candid with yourself about yourself, you are already lost. I am only going to say: be on your guard. The intrigues of a court are beyond the ken of men and angels. You know that a prison may be ready for you, and you have said to yourself: it is a trifle! But a prison is less than an intrigue, which may deprive you of better things than liberty."

"Alas, I do not understand," she answered.

"Well, for example, you are thinking of two alternatives: a prison, or exit from France escorted by the Duke of Otranto. Have you seen no others? Do you suppose that the Emperor is confined to these two? Has he not bribes? Suppose that he ordered King Jerome to convince you of the hopelessness of return to him, next to persuade you of the glory of the court, and last to offer you the name of some pliable noble at court? Human nature is deplorably weak before a glittering temptation. I do not say that you would yield, like your husband. I am only pointing out to you the ways, the crooked ways by which the diplomacy of courts often travels. You must be on your guard against other dangers than prison and exile."

"I see, I see," she said earnestly, "and you wish me to be faithful."

"To your child and your husband, to the marriage

bond," said the Cardinal solemnly. "As the Church has been faithful to her duty in your case, and as we all suffer now, partly in your interest, so must you be faithful, and bear your share of the suffering."

"How could I be otherwise, Eminence? Could a mother desert her child, or her child's cause? Can I ever forget what you have all done for me?"

"I am sure you cannot, but human nature is so weak, especially before such bribes as the Emperor can offer," and the Cardinal glanced around the group with meaning, for all four were winking their honest eyes just then in the glare of imperial bribes. "Be faithful and true, my poor child."

At that fatal phrase Betty set up a wailing which struck them all dumb, but quickly overcoming her emotion she knelt at the Cardinal's feet, kissed his hand passionately, and then stood up with an assumption of dignity.

"I promise you to be faithful and true, Eminence. I thank you from my heart for your kindness. I beseech you to forgive me for my intrusion and deceit, and to forgive my friends for their aid in both. May God reward you for your goodness to me, since I am not able . . . now," she added suddenly as she thought of King Jerome's suggestion, and smiles covered her tearful face. "Who knows but in this game of diplomacy I may yet render you important service?"

"I should be the last to doubt after your victory over both Fouché and King Jerome," said His Eminence, laughing at the sweet naïveté of the creature, who seemed now a shrewd woman and again a mere child.

"Then we are forgiven?" the Contessa said as she bowed farewell.

"You will never make a good diplomat, Corona, because your heart too often interferes with your diplomatic principles," replied Consalvi.

"A woman's privilege, Eminence."

"Which leaves her second in a game where her finesse would easily win for her first place. But so God has ordered the world. With all his genius Napoleon is blind as a bat in some directions. He does not know that. If he were not blind, or if he knew all his blindness, what could save us poor chickens from slavery or being eaten. Thus man is saved from woman."

"What a heavenly man!" Betty whispered as they passed out. The Contessa did not reply, because for her, brought up in the household of the great, the earth had nothing celestial about it, except in unexpected places, obscure retreats, where holiness grows like the violet among the lowly and unknown. She loved the Cardinal, but knew all his weaknesses, among which the greatest were his distrust of the Bonapartes, his failure to see the right course for the Church, and his insistent opposition to Bonaparte schemes. She herself belonged to the Roman faction which accepted Napoleon as the arbiter of the world for the nineteenth century, a second Charlemagne, and advocated an alliance with the master of the world so as to widen the sphere of Christian influence. These things had no meaning for Betty, who talked of nothing all the way home but her chances to secure a place at the great wedding ceremony of the next day, when the Con-

queror of Europe and the Benefactor of America was to make an Austrian princess his consort. Thus she expressed herself, and the Contessa condescended to describe the pains she had taken to oblige the Empress Josephine in this matter. Betty would go as maid to some grand dame, and would see everything in the chapel of the Louvre, provided she would have the goodness so to disguise herself in a court dress as to escape the notice of Fouché and King Jerome. And Betty promised for that day and the next to keep in the dark, to lose all opportunity to make trouble, no matter how tempting: She could afford herself this dispensation. Her spirits were now almost riotous. She had won in spite of adverse fate, and could relax long enough to enjoy the spectacles of Napoleon's marriage week, which surpassed all the glories that had gone before.

Betty had not lost her zest for the pleasures of the world. Her heart thrilled as she stood amid the splendors of the Louvre the next morning and witnessed the pride and the rage of Napoleon as he took the hand of Marie Louise, Archduchess of Austria, and led her to the altar. It seemed that the glory of the world and of time had centered for the moment in the splendid gallery, now transformed into a chapel. For the fastidious taste it was too gorgeous, quite barbaric in color, but it represented fully the factors of Napoleon's power. She saw Jerome and his Queen, a simple sort of personage, pass by without more than half the indignation usual to her at this aggravating spectacle. His glory no longer stirred her to bitterness, because he loved her still, and she

alone had a right to his love. Napoleon did not enjoy these ceremonies, simply suffering his share in them for the effect which they exercised on the popular mind. He was bored, Betty could see, until he found reason to get angry. The invited guests were all present except in one place. The space reserved for the Sacred College of Cardinals had thirteen vacant seats, which signified that Consalvi and his twelve brethren had resisted his blandishments and his orders. Surprise gave way to rage.

"He would like to swear now," Betty thought complacently.

"The idiots!" was all he said to the noble next him, but he carried a black brow to the altar, where his Cardinal-uncle stood waiting to perform the ceremony and to sing the Mass. In fact the Emperor did not recover from his irritation that morning, and several times he repeated his abusive epithets.

"They are always the same," he said to a confidant, "openly submissive, but secretly hostile, these cardinals."

"He might have known that my Cardinal is not open to his bribes or smiles," said Betty in her mind. "He went away last night thinking that flattery had won a great man to his views. There he was blind. He gets angry this morning, he is so surprised to learn that my Cardinal refused to be trapped. There also is he blinded by his own conceit. La, but I am becoming wise in my reflections."

Between the emphatic moments she amused herself by studying the costumes and making notes of the latest inventions in dress. She had her own opinion

of the new Empress, who looked a complete dowdy, with all her youth and yellow hair, beside the grace, elegance, warmth, expression, of the woman whom she had dethroned.

"And yet I would rather be Marie Louise than Josephine," sighed Betty.

"At the same time," as the comparison extended itself, "I would rather be Betsy Patterson than Queen Caroline, but that's because of the future. I shall become Queen, and the other lady will join the order of grass widows, of which I am now the Chief."

Thus Napoleon muttered in the first place, and thus Betty imitated him in the last place, thought being the surely free thing among men; or rather the wild tyrant of man, since nothing can escape it, or bind it, except God, and He will not.

CHAPTER XIII.

A HINT FROM THE REVOLUTION.

PIERRE decided that an opportunity for the Revolution had come. An enthusiast never admits defeat. Altho the brilliant Bonaparte constellation had banished the mists of the Terror, Pierre knew that the Revolution lived. It was a mere coincidence that Cardinal Consalvi held the same opinion. There were few among the politicians of Europe at this date who could be convinced of the essential change which had seized the substance of things. The old order had gone forever, but only the few believed it, of which the proof was seen a few years later when the diplomats of the Congress of Vienna refused to recognize the change at the suggestion of Consalvi. Pierre therefore took rank with his master as a political theorist. The defeated and disgraced cause, in his opinion, had an opportunity to make its existence felt in the quarrel of Napoleon with the Pope. Some kind of a secret council to which Pierre belonged agreed with him on this point. It was decided that a blow should be struck during the nuptial feasts; the victim chosen was Consalvi, since it was difficult to get at the Pope or the Emperor; and the bloody death of a famous diplomat, in the halls of the palace, after a spectacular difference with the tyrant of Europe, would create a popular uproar. Pierre had only the kindest feelings for His Eminence, who treated him kindly. He

regretted that Consalvi should be the necessary choice. Still, he proceeded about his plans earnestly, since the destruction of this one man, as a kind of preface, meant the annihilation later on of all priests and despots, who prey upon the people because they are essentially birds of prey. Fouché belonged to the obscure revolutionary forces at work beneath the surface, and Pierre sought his advice at times, and occasionally gave him some information. He admired the successful chief of police for his genius, but did not trust him. His opinion, however, had great value, and therefore Pierre on pretence of offering information consulted the Duke of Otranto.

"What's the mystery?" said Fouché after a glance at the air of his spy, who had sought him in his private office.

"An order from the council, Excellency."

"Ah, indeed! By all means let us hear it."

It was impossible to tell if the great man were laughing.

"It is known that the Emperor is in a rage with this Cardinal Consalvi, who has offended him by staying away from the marriage yesterday. It is certain that the Cardinal will appear before the Emperor to-day, and will be insulted, then driven out, finally arrested, and perhaps hanged later."

"An acute council," commented Fouché.

"But friends will interfere on both sides in time to save bloodshed, and so, as usual, nothing happens. The council therefore decided to have something happen; in fine to let the Cardinal's blood out, on the steps of the palace, in such a way that Bonaparte can-

not escape the responsibility of that blood. There are some things even an Emperor cannot explain."

"The council are idiots, of whom you are the chief," said Fouché placidly. "It is easy to see, my friend, why you are not in my place. With your enthusiasm, education, cleverness, and opportunity, you should be at the top. If you are not precisely at the bottom, thank me. Do you think men such fools as to imagine Napoleon would choose his wedding-day and his own palace for the murder of a man whom he could stifle in a hole any day, or choke with a piece of cheese?"

"Permit me to differ," said Pierre, leaning close to his chief, who suddenly seized him by the throat and brought him to his knees suddenly.

"You dare to speak, to differ, cut-throat? Perhaps after all we shall have some pig's blood shed at this wedding."

He smiled into the lean, amazed face of the spy, close to his own, then flung him away. Pierre arose awed, arranged his costume, and said:

"A thousand pardons, Excellency. I submit to your superior judgment. Of course the scheme is absurd, but there's the order of the council."

"I give you another in its place, dear friend. Attend the Cardinal to the palace. Be there ahead of him if necessary. Put the Marquis on his guard. If any harm comes to Consalvi through you, fly far. If you can be caught, you shall be sent to the mines."

Pierre retired with dignity. Such rebuffs did not weaken him. Had he not fed on them since 1795? In every cause men had to receive blows as well as to give them, and what glorious blows had not the Revo-

lution delivered! He saw again all the heads that had rolled under the knife of the guillotine, all the drowned bodies of the Seine, all the flesh in the trenches at Lyons. He reasoned that too much flesh had been destroyed, because the death of Consalvi, at this bright moment, in the palace, with his blood streaming over the shining floor, would make more noise and trouble in Europe, bring more glory to the Revolution, than many deaths after the old, rough method. However, he followed Fouché's advice and betook him to the palace in the late afternoon. He had decided on the death of Consalvi. Ah, the long years that had passed since the royal palaces had witnessed deeds of blood worth while! It was time to begin, to revive the tradition of '93, to offer a sacrifice to the shade of Marat, the glorious! He summoned a few of his aids, lackeys of the court, spies like himself, serving many masters. They met in an alcove where the cardinals were to wait their turn for presentation to the Empress Marie Louise.

"You are ready, my braves?" said Pierre in a thrilling whisper.

"We await the orders of Your Excellency."

"Excellency! Fouché should hear that! Well, brothers, we have at last our chance at fortune. *Bonaparte* will expel some of these red rats, and they will pass through this chamber to escape the incoming mob of worshippers, sycophants. Let us go into this chamber."

They followed him into a gorgeous apartment which led into a corridor with stairs at the end guarded by a railing.

"At the signal," said Pierre proudly, "which will be given when Bonaparte ejects these men, raise as much disturbance as possible, and follow the red rats this way. Consalvi will be the slowest to go, because he is the most courageous. You will catch him at these stairs. Let all the others pass on. I shall see that he is detained long enough for you to do your pretty work. Should things go wrong, get away to your holes and forget your own names and faces. As the red priests look alike in a crowd I shall be at pains to point out our man, who has been marked by Providence to receive your compliments. Shade of Marat! here he is now. Stand aside, but watch him."

The lackeys vanished as Consalvi entered alone. An obliging page had put him on the road to the alcove of the cardinals, but no other person had been willing to show common courtesy. Anxiety had seized him, until he met Pierre.

"Here is one friendly face at least," he said to himself, altho he knew the character of Pierre. "I am troubled and yet I should not be. The attendants avoid me, and no friends seem near. What should this mean? The death hinted at by Fouché and threatened by the Emperor? At the foot of the throne? It seems impossible."

"Your Eminence," said Pierre.

"Do you know the way to the waiting-room?"

"Up these steps, along the corridor, a great room, and an alcove just outside, Eminence."

"So near?" said the Cardinal. "True, death is never far off. The little page meant well in directing me."

"If I might advise Your Eminence."

"Speak."

"All that I have seen and heard here to-day hint at danger to Your Eminence. I am told that a day's delay often makes a large difference in the imperial temper."

"I thank you for the hint. If you could find my brother, the Marquis, it would help somewhat. Let him know where to look for me."

Pierre bowed and the Cardinal went on saying to himself:

"These forebodings are too monstrous. They spring from a childish fear. Napoleon is too great to stoop to petty murder, even if human life is cheap to him. If death is here for me I accept it in the name of Christ. In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum."

As he went down the corridor Pierre beckoned to his hiding lackeys and by a gesture bade them mark the victim.

"Now you know him, brothers, see that you make no mistake. He is worth all the rest put together. Begone to your posts."

They slipped away like cats, and Pierre stood looking at the vanishing form of the Cardinal with a feeling of self-pity.

"He is not the first priest-I helped up the scaffold," he thought, and a gentle smile spread over his dark face as he recalled the successful murders, legal and private, in which he had a joyous hand.

"And they all died bravely," he said, as if the thought occurred to him for the first time. "This

Consalvi has the same mettle. The rage of an emperor troubles him not. Poor devil! all hands are raised against him to-day. These court jackals sniff death off him and bite at his heels. And he is worth all of them that are and were and ever shall be. Their chief flings him into the gutter for me to—let me see. This should be the place.”

He examined the corridor and the steps carefully, marking mentally where the Cardinal should receive the fatal stroke.

“One cut and his troubles are over. Then let Europe howl and Bonaparte explain. The imperial foot may slip in this priest’s blood. I agree with Voltaire that the tyrants should be drowned in the blood of the priests. A very popular sentence that.”

Pierre had often made it the point of a discourse to his friends of the Revolution, and it went very well. He took his place in the alcove near the group of Cardinals to watch the progress of his game. The prelates were very uneasy without knowing why, except that the master of ceremonies had deserted them. The night had come on. Along the grand corridor the great and gaudy of court and city were pouring as fast as they could be accommodated. The thirteen Cardinals, in the soft light of the candles, made a striking sight for curious eyes. A few understood that some insult was intended for these clerics. It was whispered along the line of guests, who laughed as they passed at the predicament of the despised priests. In vain they appealed to various officials, either to be presented or dismissed. No one had any orders. Consalvi waited hopefully for his brother, but the

Marquis was waiting for him in the audience-chamber. It fell to Betty's cunning wit to make the first move. She enjoyed a position not far from the spot where Napoleon and his Empress were standing, somewhat in the rear of the dais, and could catch even the whispers which the Emperor exchanged with his aids. Some official referred to him the request of the ignored prelates waiting patiently in the alcove. His face blazed with anger as he turned to an officer near by.

"Have them dismissed at once," he said. "They should never have been permitted to enter the palace, but I rejoice in their public humiliation, as they rejoiced in mine."

The officer bowed and began to look about for a space in which to move away, for in the dense crowd the task was none too easy. He had moved off a few feet when the Emperor recalled him.

"Fouché suggested how useless it is to bother with these small creatures," he said to a confidant. "They are indeed small, but I shall not let Consalvi and Opizzoni go without punishment."

Then he spoke aloud to the young officer.

"Let them go except Consalvi and Opizzoni. Expel them offensively, so that all Paris will be talking about the affair to-morrow."

The officer bowed again and disappeared in the crowd. Betty had heard enough to know that danger of some kind threatened her friend, and she flew at once to the nearest door, with her usual disregard of the conventions. She knew a way to get at Corona and perhaps at the Marquis, for without doubt he

would be found not far from the Contessa. Her conjecture proved correct, for she came upon them in a retired spot chatting not too amiably.

"The question is where are the Cardinals?" said the Marquis, after she had informed him of the imperial order.

"One section has already been presented," she answered, "and a fine lecture your brother and his party got from the Emperor when he addressed the faithful cardinals. The others must be somewhere along the line of march from the front door."

"I know, I know," interrupted the Contessa, and she gave the Marquis directions to reach the alcove. At that moment Fouché appeared in the distance, and Betty fled in one direction while Corona fled in another. The Duke of Otranto, resplendent in court costume, did not see them.

"Ah, Marquis," he said, greeting Andrea kindly, "after all you did not succeed in persuading your brother to have regard for your interests. And now we are in various kinds of trouble. Let me whisper what you must not repeat even to your own mind. The Emperor actually ordered Consalvi taken to prison last night, and to be shot there secretly. I intercepted the order of course."

"A thousand thanks, Excellency. And the Emperor has just ordered that my brother, with the others, be expelled from the palace. I go to find and if necessary to protect him."

"A very impulsive man the Emperor," said Fouché. "Yes, by all means go, and do not leave him until you have him safe at home. If necessary send to me for a

police guard. No one knows when tragedy crops up out of these circumstances."

Meanwhile the officer sent by the Emperor to expel the poor Cardinals found them in the alcove quite overcome with the helplessness of their position; but the execution of his orders relieved them somewhat while increasing their embarrassment. A few lackeys placed themselves at the service of the officer. Pierre had disappeared. Consalvi volunteered to lead the way through the corridor by which he had come. The officer rudely acquiesced, as he saw no other way to carry out the orders which he had misunderstood. It was impossible to pass down the corridor through which the crowd still streamed. The imperial messenger was of the type common enough at that moment, a youth dominated by ambition, pleasure, and scorn of religion, and brutal enough in his expression of these lofty sentiments.

"You are Consalvi and you are Opizzoni," he said to these prelates. "Well, you wait till the others pass on. The lackeys will set you outside the door with a rush. You are the ringleaders I believe."

The prelates did not reply but waited their turn.

"Now then," said the officer, "hustle these two without any ceremony to the door. Do not let them dally, and see that they get to the other side of the street as soon as they reach the door."

Two lackeys seized Cardinal Opizzoni and hurried him after his brethren. Consalvi drew himself away from the two who stretched their hands to seize him, and remained standing with a look for them and for the officer which was not misunderstood.

"Cardinal Fesch shall hear of you," he said to the officer, who suddenly remembered that the Emperor had an uncle in the Sacred College, and became more polite.

"You will pardon me for carrying out the orders of the Emperor, Eminence. You were specially selected for public humiliation. However, after you have been put outside the palace I have no further power over you."

The lackeys, warned by the changed tone and manner of the officer, did not lay hands upon Consalvi, who walked away from the sneering group into the corridor. It was empty, except for a lackey at the foot of the steps. Two others suddenly appeared and seized the Cardinal by the arms, but he shook himself free with unexpected strength, and partially hurled the men down the steps. The third ran to their assistance, and helped them to gain their feet quickly.

"Too slow," cried a sharp voice of command from some dark corner. "At him with your knives."

"What! are you assassins?" cried the Cardinal in astonishment, and at the same moment he felt rather than reasoned that Napoleon had no hand in this adventure, from its very clumsiness. He had only to run twenty feet to find himself in the crowd of guests, streaming along to the reception. But his question was scarcely uttered when three men were rushing upon him with daggers in their hands. It surprised the leader to receive the Cardinal's well-shod foot in the breast, with such violence that he fell against the other two and threw them into momentary confusion.

"Here, officer," shouted Consalvi in a voice of

thunder to an imaginary party farther off, "here are the villains! Hasten!"

"At him again, and finish him. There is no officer. He will escape you, idiots," cried the first voice again.

The Cardinal having secured a slight delay in the action gathered up his robes and ran for the alcove, but the lackeys overtook him, the first barring his way to the door and the others seizing him by the hair to pull him backwards and plunge their daggers in his neck.

"His neck, his neck," shouted the man in command.

The Cardinal gathered his robes about his head and sank to the ground, preferring to receive the blades in his body, and while they struggled with him the door of the alcove was flung open by the Marquis, the third lackey was flung upon the struggling group, Andrea drew his sword with an oath, the man in hiding shouted a command, and the lackeys vanished in an instant. Consalvi disentangled himself from his garments and stood up. His face was pale. Seeing that a few guests had followed the Marquis through the door, he gave him a warning glance, took his arm, and walked away. The guests saw the deserted corridor and concluded that nothing had happened, in which they were quite correct. Somewhere in the darkness Pierre was swearing over the conclusion.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SECOND EXILE.

SADNESS hung upon the household of the Cardinal the next day. The worst had happened. Pierre gave no sign of disappointment, but His Eminence showed depression and the Marquis was plainly in the dumps. The attempted assassination was not the only mournful incident of the evening. After leaving his brother at home, the Marquis returned to the palace to complete with the Contessa that interview interrupted by Betty's warning. He could not sleep until he had seen her, for the thing seemed too monstrous to believe, altho it was already the gossip of the court. A young nobleman of his acquaintance, but ignorant of his relationship to the Contessa, had said to him lightly as Corona passed by:

"The Contessa Franchi is luckier in her brother than you in yours, I fancy."

"I am not sure that I understand you," said Andrea.

"Ah, I forgot that you have been at court only for a day. Well, then, as you have already seen, perhaps, Monsignor Franchi is devoted to Bonaparte, and your brother is not. Monsignor Franchi hopes to reconcile the Pope to residence at Avignon, and his success will earn for him the red hat and even a chance for the tiara. Already he is a great favorite at court, and through that favor his sister mounts higher and higher.

She may yet marry a little king. But you remain obscure and disregarded, because your brother opposes Bonaparte."

"Very true. The fortune of war, sir," said Andrea lightly.

"Now the Monsignor," continued the gossip with relish of his tale, "is not half so clever as his sister. She is a diplomat, not by training but by instinct. Her brother is too nervous, too heavy, for his position. He must depend upon her. It is said that the Emperor depends more upon her dimpling smiles than upon her brother's diplomacy in winning friends among the Italians and especially the Romans, people like yourself for example."

"Very likely," Andrea forced himself to say, for he wished to hear more of this gossip.

"She holds a winning card anyway, but it is a case of win or perish. So long as the Franchis are able to make a weekly report of progress their positions are good and their salaries assured. Excuse me, please. I am called by a friend," and the gossip moved off leaving Andrea in a frame of mind.

Corona and her brother, mere creatures of the Emperor, earning salaries by winning opponents to the imperial side! His hot blood stirred in him at the thought, and he sought her at once to tax her with the disgrace. He sought her again on his return to the palace.

"Let us finish what we began," he said. He had simply told her that the Cardinal had got safely home without misadventure.

"But it is an old complaint, Andrea, which I can-

not explain further. That my brother and I believe in the star of the Bonapartes is not a sin."

"Ah, but do you know what construction is put on your behavior? Do you know what they are saying of you here at court, of you and your brother?"

"The gossip of a court is always scandalous."

"What! when it says of your brother that he seeks to sell the Pope to your Emperor in exchange for the red hat?"

"Do not take it too seriously, Andrea," she pleaded, disquieted by the expression of his face. "My brother will receive the honors of the Sacred College simply by waiting, as you know."

"They say of you," he persisted, "that you are Napoleon's agent; that your smiles, your dimples, your pretty phrases, your sweet voice, are so many traps set by the Emperor for your friends."

"I see you are bent on being unreasonable."

"Ah, I have touched you! What would His Eminence say to that gossip?"

"He would not notice the slander. Nor should you. Would you make us hirelings, or worse, spies?"

"I shall find the source of this gossip," he answered wrathfully.

"I forbid you to meddle, Marquis."

"You dare not. It is for your good name."

"I forbid you," she repeated. "You have no right."

"No right?"

"None. You lose what you have when you entertain such suspicions of me and my brother."

And with that stinging phrase the Contessa marched away to her duties. The Marquis felt very badly. The

star of his destiny was evidently on the wane. So he expressed it, as he thought of the Emperor's rage, the attempt on the life of his brother, the scandals affecting Corona, the consequences impending. Betty encountered him later and insisted on the details of the evening.

"That was a row and no mistake," said she with satisfaction. "I begin to understand the troubles of a cardinal. Why he has no more chance with that brilliant beast Napoleon than a baby with a bear. If you are not in jail to-morrow it will be because you are both dead."

"And are you not fearful of yourself, Madame Bonaparte? In this place above all others?"

"Not so long as I am making history," she said gaily. "Do you know, I had a significant glance from Jerome. It hinted at something coming, and I am expecting it any moment."

"Perhaps here it is," the Marquis suggested in a low, warning tone, as the Duke of Otranto entered the room. Betty made her curtsy to the Marquis and stepped off in another direction, but Fouché put himself in her way and she had to curtsy again.

"As imprudent as lovely," he said with a cold smile.

"Entirely American, Excellency," she answered. "But I shall keep my promise. I had to see the grand fêtes and ceremonies and to be a part of them. Was it not poor enough compensation for the loss of my rightful place here? Now I shall be able to say I saw with my own eyes."

"Nevertheless a warning, Madame. I fear the Em-

peror has learned that you are in the country, even in Paris, perhaps in the palace."

"Which means—" said Betty paling.

"Should he ask for you, he must be told that you are in England, or on the sea; if either cannot be truthfully said then you must be produced from prison."

"Then Excellency, as a friend of—well, let us say the American Republic—could you not tell him that I am in England or on the sea?"

"Adorable creature," replied Fouché with a genuine burst of admiration, for she looked sweet enough to eat at that arch moment, "let me reply to your suggestion in the words of an immortal American: I cannot tell a lie—that is, to the Emperor."

"Oh, of course. I understand. In court there must be one man to whom the truth is told . . . always."

"Otherwise," said the ducal rat-catcher, "if we were all lying, diplomacy and statecraft would perish."

"I pity the people who tell the truth then. They always get the worst of it," said Betty.

"As they are usually people who believe in the eternal life, and in heavenly compensation, perhaps they do not get the worst of it in the long run," he answered gravely.

"I have had enough of the long run. I am an example of it. Yet I dare not give up hoping. I would die if I did. May I go? May I say farewell, and at the same time thank you, Excellency, for the sweetest happiness of the past five years?"

"It is real grief to part, Madame," said Fouché, and he kissed her hand, "modified by the delight of

having served you, and the pleasure of being able to say to the Emperor: the most charming woman on earth is now in England."

Betty laughed as she curtsied, and both gentlemen laughed with her, for only a happy child, or a free-running brook in the woods, could match the music of her voice when she was really tickled. Certainly the precincts of the court had never heard the merry sound, and the two courtiers stood a moment after she had vanished wondering at the strange sweetness of the tone. Betty snapped her fingers at the warning of Fouché, so delicately but pointedly given. She had given her word to leave France, and her word must be kept, but not until she had seen King Jerome again. She could no longer depend upon the Contessa, whom Fouché had frightened, and who would insist on her immediate departure from court. She must either avoid the lady or feign preparations for a return to her secret refuge. The Contessa did not give her a chance to deliberate, but came to her early in the morning with a pale, set face and pressing orders.

"Fouché knows everything and therefore you must depart, Madame."

"He knows everything," said Betty from the pillow, "but I have made him my friend, and he will wait a few days more."

"Oh, my dear," complained the Contessa, "can I not make you understand? This Fouché is unspeakable. He has no friends, for he has sold what he has not destroyed and exiled. We are all in the den of a tiger, and at any moment he may rend us, Andrea, you, me, and the Cardinal. The ways of a court are

not clear to you, my poor girl. This Fouché, who is the chief spy of the Emperor, is also spied upon by other spies of the Emperor. Therefore he must report to Napoleon the truth, for Napoleon hears part of it from some other direction. Probably the Emperor knows even now that you are in this house, that I am protecting you, and advising you. Why, that door may open this instant with an order for your arrest, for mine. You must go at once, to Malmaison or to England. I feel sure that Fouché, who reads faces like a saint almost, believes you will linger, and that he will have to plan against you, or to catch you on the road to Belgium. Yes, I advise Malmaison within the hour and secretly."

The length and vivacity of the speech roused Betty to a sense of her danger, but did not change her determination.

"Yes, yes, Corona, my dear, I shall set out at once for Malmaison. After that to England. But what has happened to frighten you so? Have you heard anything?"

"What have I not heard this morning?" said the girl, beginning to tremble and weep. "Did you know that the Cardinal was almost slain? He would have been but for your timely warning."

And the Contessa threw her arms around Betty and kissed her fervently.

"He has to expect such things," Betty replied. "He is a great man."

"And now all our hopes are destroyed," the Contessa went on. "The Emperor has banished him to Rheims and ordered him to lay aside his robes of

Cardinal. He is to have no share in the government of the Church. He will be lucky if he escapes with his life."

"All this is certain?"

"It will be announced to-day, and the Cardinal with his household must set out for Rheims at once. Do you wonder that I am in dread of seeing that door open, and officers walk in to arrest us both. We have offended freely, and the Emperor is unforgiving where his friends are concerned."

"I think I used to read something about the Turkish Sultan and the Russian Czar being tyrants," Betty said reflectively, "but can they beat this French Emperor on tyranny? The court is just lovely, but after all I begin to think the American wilderness has advantages. Well, give my love to the Consalvis. My dear Corona, how can I thank you for all your kindness. I may not see you again in a long time. So, goodbye, and a thousand thanks, and love a thousand times."

They embraced fervently, and at that moment came an imperative knock at the door, soft but commanding. They shrieked together and hesitated, then Betty jumped from her bed and opened the door a trifle. A maid stood without who looked at Betty's face closely, put her finger on her lips, handed her a note, and skipped away. With beating heart Betty ran to the window and read aloud the following lines:

DEAREST:

Fly at once from Paris, avoid the road to England, and stay in hiding a month at least. There is a plot

against you, which includes prison, a marriage perhaps, and a low place at court, but separates you forever from

JEROME.

"The very suggestion of the Cardinal," whispered Corona, "that they would marry you to some noble and give you a place at court to keep you quiet and to hold you a prisoner."

"Warning enough for this time," Betty replied, as she kissed the signature. "I shall fly this moment. Corona, goodby, goodby, goodby, and let us pray to meet again."

The Contessa did not say that she would, for her relief in getting rid of this firebrand of a woman was greater than her admiration for the courageous but erratic creature.

"Remember that you are followed by spies," was her last injunction.

"It is certainly a great business in France, the spies," Betty observed, as she made her preparations to depart in a rude disguise. "My God, what a rat-eaten ship this empire of Napoleon's must be."

With this sage remark Betty vanished from Paris, much to the perplexity of Fouché, who had counted on her lingering a week, on catching her between the city and the ship, and on a few other plans based on the nature of woman. He did not know that Josephine sheltered her at Malmaison, but even Fouché did not hope to know everything. His forged note from King Jerome had overshot the mark, for if it had fooled Betty, it had helped the Contessa to

make the proper impression. A few days later the Consalvi household set out for Rheims, and the Franchis slipped away to a seaside resort for a change of air. It was advisable to keep out of sight until the Emperor began to ask for them. Thus a second time this magician of the Bonapartes had prevailed over the little helpless group bound by various ties. He had called Consalvi, the Marquis and Jerome to Paris in 1801 for his grand design, and had scattered them a few months later; he had called them again in 1810 for the same purpose, had failed to win them, and had driven them away into exile. The court laughed a moment at the eclipse of Consalvi, the annihilation of the Marquis, the failure of the Franchis, and the Patterson incident, and then forgot, for in the eyes of the courtiers these incidents and personages were mere dust from the wheel of the Bonaparte chariot. They would never be heard of again, never seen, never felt, and were as good as buried. Only Fouché and Andrea remembered the last sweet laugh of Betty, and saw her making her last malicious curtsy, in their daydreams. Betty recalled every minute of her dalliance in court, and never tired of describing to her friends the glories of the Louvre wedding. Hope came to dwell with the poor victims of a great tyranny, in Rheims with the Cardinal and his brother, in Malmaison where no other hope shone, and in the obscure retreat where the Contessa Corona wept and prayed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STRUGGLE BEGINS AGAIN.

CARDINAL CONSALVI enjoyed his little garden in Rheims very much. It was so placed as to give him a view of the ancient city, and so enclosed that strangers could not see within. The little house protected it on three sides. A brick pavement encircled a green lawn in which grew a single apple tree. Beside the tree stood a small shelter in which His Eminence took breakfast on fair mornings. When he looked up from his notes he could see the roofs and towers of the city, and the glories of the open sky. At night he enjoyed the lights in the houses, and the eternal lights overhead. What peace and content! No state worries, no correspondence, no visitors, nothing! The world fell away from him as a fever leaves the body, and his nature seemed to have become cool with the freshness of the earth in the springtime.

"I had often read in the lives of the saints," he observed once to the Marquis, "of the freedom of spirit which often comes from helplessness. I know it now by experience. Never have I felt so free."

"The Emperor has forgotten you," the Marquis said sadly.

"You mean he has forgotten you, Andrea, which is truer," His Eminence replied with kindly malice. "No, such men never forget. At present I am not

useful, but the moment his plans need me, well, then Fouché and the assassin will invade this garden."

He spoke thus sharply to relieve the sorrow of his brother by a view of some consequences of imperial favor. Two years had passed since the marriage at the Louvre, very long years for the Marquis Consalvi, who had lost confidence, not merely in his own future, but in the brilliant abilities of his diplomat brother. Surely the Bonaparte constellation could no longer be called a comet, after the glories of the recent campaigns. Napoleon was destined to hold the proud place of conqueror of the modern world, and to rank with Caesar and Alexander. His corporals had become princes and marshals, his relatives had become kings; and he, the Marquis Consalvi, who might have been among the stars, still languished in wretched exile because his brother the diplomat could foresee the fall of the Bonapartes. The Cardinal never appeared to notice the steady change in his brother, but kept repeating the maxims and facts foretelling the downfall of an absolutism which had necessarily sprung into existence from the Reign of Terror. Nevertheless the Marquis had made up his mind to enter the world by way of the court, to seek the glory of the sword, and to appeal to Napoleon for aid. His love for his brother, his regard of his own honor, his respect for his faith, made it necessary that the scheme should develop prudently and slowly; but develop it must, unless his relationship to the Cardinal had closed Bonaparte's heart to the noblest who bore the name of Consalvi. Long before he came to this determination the keen eyes of the Cardinal had noted

the change of feeling, the growth of resolution, the increasing strength of temptation, and he had met them at various times with veiled warnings, helpful insinuations, loving admonitions, that by degrees revealed Andrea to himself, without letting him see how clearly his thoughts had been read.

"There is nothing in glory," Consalvi repeated over and over. "To him without it, it looks like the robe of Solomon. To him that has it there is never lacking a violent appetite for a longer or brighter robe. Get married, brother, and look for happiness in the love of wife and children."

"One can seek glory and get married together," Andrea replied.

"Well, I change my advice to yours. Do both," said His Eminence gaily, "and one will correct the other."

"You mean that I should marry Corona and enter the court under her protection?"

"I said nothing about the court, which will soon be a carcass for the vultures. There is no glory for such as you among the Bonapartes."

"So Your Eminence observed in 1805, and again in 1810," said Andrea drily. "Yet what glory in those eight years! What golden opportunities have I missed! Is this another prophecy?"

"There is no need to prophesy," said the Cardinal gently. "The end of Napoleon is in the very nature of things. It may be many years away, an event not of our day, for the Emperor is still young. But it is inevitable."

"If he succumbs only after our death, why his reign

is as good to me as if it were eternal," said the impatient and disappointed Marquis.

Such conversations checked him however, and prevented him from taking any hasty step. He knew not in what direction to turn, how to proceed, what patron to petition. Each plan seemed to threaten his brother with shame or danger. However, fate at that moment pointed its finger at the Cardinal in exile, and the characters of the drama set out with one impulse for Rheims. Owing to marvelous circumstances Napoleon found it necessary one fine morning to deal with Consalvi again. He wanted formal possession of Rome, the aid of Consalvi in persuading the sick Pope Pius VII to surrender his temporal kingdom peacefully, and the same Cardinal to succeed Pius on the papal throne. Fouché received his orders at breakfast and the Franchis were suddenly called from their retirement to work in behalf of their political theories. Cardinal Fesch gave them instructions to visit Consalvi at Rheims, to learn if retirement had changed his views, to urge him to moderation, and to promise him much should he deem it advisable to travel up to the palace of Fontainebleau, and to advise the Pope to change his attitude. While Andrea was deep in futile schemes for getting at Napoleon, the imperial agents arrived in Rheims. With the Contessa travelled a maid of demure aspect and perfect manners, for she kept in her place and held her peace without a single reproof from the watchful Corona. The women put up at a convent, while Monsignor Franchi accepted the hospitality of the Archbishop. In the evening he paid his respects to the Cardinal, from

whom he received an invitation to breakfast next morning. It was the morning the Marquis Consalvi had planned for so long, but unsuspecting of its advent he was not the first to greet it. That honor was reserved for the sleepy but admirable Pierre, agent of the Revolution and admirer of Satan, who was called from his bed almost at dawn by his employer Fouché, Duke of Otranto.

"You are the only man in Rheims," said the Minister of Police, whom Pierre sleepily led into the garden by the back door, "who enjoys the honor of entertaining an imperial Duke. Pardon me for interrupting your slumber, but there is work to be done in the next few hours. How is everything here?"

"Delightful. I have no doubt Your Excellency has come to make the Marquis a general. He has been longing for it a good while."

"To-day the hunger shall be satisfied," said Fouché pleasantly. "I wonder though that he and his black brother have slept at all with your dagger so close to their throats."

"His Eminence was in no danger," replied Pierre with dignity. "You forget that I do not kill but by command of men like the Emperor: men with consciences."

"Just so. His Eminence is to entertain visitors at breakfast this morning. Undoubtedly your room overlooks this charming garden? Well, I shall occupy that room while the breakfast is going on, if it will not interfere with your plans or comfort."

"I shall be engaged in waiting on the table, Excellency. My room is at the corner. Tell me first, is

it true, what has just been whispered around town, a terrible defeat for the Emperor in Russia?"

"Not merely a defeat, but a death-blow," replied Fouché with indifference. "Does no one here know it?"

"No one has given a sign, and the Marquis is dreaming of glory by the side of the Emperor. How should they know with every hole guarded?"

"So much the better. The breakfast comes off at eight. You will be ready to admit me to your room shortly after that hour. Be on the alert. You will see events to-day."

Serious events Pierre thought, when the Duke of Otranto came in person at that hour to examine the stage, and to prepare for himself a part in the play. A great defeat in Russia for the Emperor! What did it amount to, when Fouché took it so easily? Nothing could overcome this Corsican until his hour arrived. Then a lover of the Revolution with a dagger might have the honor of stabbing him who had stabbed the great movement for liberty, equality, fraternity. Pierre's dreams became rosy with the blood of an emperor! As the sun rose he set the table in the arbor beside the apple-tree, and thought of the dinners he should eat as the assassin of Bonaparte. Perhaps the great event might take place in a simple but lovely place like this garden, dwelt in by a worthless priest. His gentle thoughts were disturbed by the appearance of the Cardinal, who came to see if all things were ready for his visitors. Then Monsignor Franchi arrived, a trifle careworn, but smooth as ever, playing his part of imperial diplomat with the grace of Talley-

rand, full of sweet phrases as if disappointment and failure did not exist in his world. On his kindly face there was not a trace of the discouragement which Fouché had seen only a few minutes previous, when he received the report of Franchi's interview the previous night with Consalvi.

"I am in despair," he said to Fouché, "for I find His Eminence harder than a rock. Moreover I am tired of attempting the impossible."

"But you forget the imperial rewards, Monsignor, and the success of your policy," Fouché replied.

"What if Cardinal Consalvi hears of the Russian disaster? He prophesied it years ago. He has a set conviction that the first great disaster will throw the Emperor into the abyss."

"I can easily see," repeated Fouché blandly, "that you have forgotten how the Emperor rewards his friends."

"His successful friends, Excellency. I have not been successful."

"The Emperor is in Rheims, Monsignor."

"Worse luck, for if he meddles before the time I shall fail."

"Impossible, for the Emperor is about to set Consalvi free, to restore to him the purple, to send him to the Pope, and to honor him still further, if Consalvi proves gracious and sensible."

"As God lives!" exclaimed the depressed Franchi with lively satisfaction. "Oh, generous Emperor! ever ready to forgive and forget. Then I shall try again, with something like hope in my heart. His Eminence

cannot be insensible to the advantages of Fontainebleau."

"Courage, then, Monsignor," Fouché said, "and once more to the attack. I go to bring the Emperor here, in time to crown you with glory."

Monsignor Franchi could not detect the malicious expression of Fouché's face, nor the scorn in his words. The chief of police knew that Consalvi was further than ever from Napoleon's influence, just as he knew that the Empire was doomed and the great Napoleon's little day over. He was already scheming to rise on the flood which in a few months would submerge the dynasty, and therefore the little plans and ambitions of men like Franchi, who saw nothing but their own dreams, amused him highly. He did not go to the Emperor but to Pierre's room, and from that vantage-point he saw Monsignor Franchi as in a comedy try to win over the really great man whose policy Franchi despised, because it was not his own.

"Your Eminence does not seem to have suffered from your long and intolerable exile," Franchi said politely. "One would not suppose, from your looks, that you lived in the desert."

"Desert!" exclaimed the Cardinal with some scorn. "It is heaven. That wall, Monsignor, shuts out the world. I no longer sprinkle my bread with the ashes of humiliation. Except that I miss Rome and grieve for the unfortunate situation of the Church, I enjoy almost perfect peace. But let us forget ourselves and our opinions and feelings. The great question is: what are we going to do for these poor children, Corona and Andrea?"

"I do not know, Eminence. He left Paris, she told me, with a cold word of farewell. He has hardly written to her. She is conscious of nothing on her part, and too proud to ask for an explanation."

"The usual lover's quarrel I suppose. Yet something serious is at the bottom of it. Andrea, who was never done singing her praises, avoids all mention of her, will not let me talk of her, grows gloomy when I insist, and runs away. He has changed much in these years and I begin to fear for him."

"Let us hope that this visit will scatter the cloud."

"We must do more than hope," said the Cardinal with emphasis. "Do you speak to Corona, and I shall speak to him, in such a way that they will be forced to have it out with each other. A storm will clear the air. Oh, we shall yet sit under their root-tree in our old age, Monsignor, and see their children playing together, while I remind you of this day, and how you fought for the great comet that snuffed itself out in disaster."

"Disaster may happen to comets, but not to Napoleon," said Franchi with great unction. "I am surprised at the obstinacy of this idea in the mind of Your Eminence, seeing how much Napoleon has done to prove its weakness."

"We will talk of this in my study, Monsignor," replied Consalvi with a warning gesture, for the Marquis had entered from the house. He gazed with astonishment on the visitor who shook hands with him.

"We are both here," said the Monsignor, smiling.

"With news from court," said the Cardinal. "Overtures are coming again, dear brother Andrea."

"From the Emperor? What! not the end of your exile?"

"You mean the end of yours. Do not protest. I thank you for your patience and your fidelity. You, who might have been a marshal of France, have stood by me, when reason seemed to point the other way."

"It was my duty, Eminence."

"I want still more from you. Do not think me grasping. Corona will be here to breakfast. She is here now I believe. You know my hopes about her and you. Why not give me your confidence?"

"Impossible at this moment, but later," said Andrea agitated. "Do not press me, do not interfere. I shall settle the matter this very hour."

The two prelates looked at his frowning face with sadness.

"Andrea, do not forget, my brother, that you have been in my heart ever since our mother—God rest her sweet soul!—placed you in my arms, bidding me be father and mother to you. No other human love has shared my heart with you. By that love of years I beseech you, do nothing rashly, nothing that may not be undone. This jewel, Corona, has not her like in the whole world."

The Marquis did not reply at once. At that moment Corona entered and the two prelates greeted her, pointing out the silent figure near the wall of the garden.

"Settle everything now, for the time has come," said Franchi to his sister. "Be calm and tender. He is young and rash, without that experience and training which you have had at court. Bear everything.

Remember he loves you. And we, his brother and I, long to see you united again."

They withdrew to the study within, and Fouché, somewhat disappointed but still interested, disposed himself to learn why the lovers had fallen out, and how they would succeed in patching up their quarrel.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GRAVE MISUNDERSTANDING.

As Corona came forward the Marquis greeted her courteously but coldly. The sight of her filled him suddenly with grief, for time had only increased her fresh beauty, adding the grace of melancholy to the blue eyes, and a touch of pathos to her proud demeanor. This sudden surge of grief in his soul he did not understand. He had loved her in a way. They had been brought up together from early childhood, and their betrothal had been accepted with joy. He had suffered much from the report that Napoleon employed her as a spy, a report which he had accepted as true, because all the gossips of the court confirmed it. He did not object to her support of the Bonapartes. Was he not to attach himself to the Emperor, and think himself lucky to be attached? Oh, that he had done so ten years earlier, when glory could be had for the asking! But to be the spy of the Emperor, to be trapping partisans for him in secret, the mere thought had given him a sickness. He had watched her covertly for a few weeks after the scandal had reached him, and all her actions sustained the gossip. He had gone away from Paris without farewell, and had written only a few letters in three years. How could he lay such a matter before the Cardinal? Perhaps he did not care for her as much as he had thought, since in time he grew indifferent to the thought of her. But now the tenderness of years, the affection of years,

the thought of years, took the form of grief at sight of her dignified, graceful beauty, and filled his heart with love and anger. On her part Corona was disposed to be gracious. The poor boy had had a hard time of it in his life, shut out from his natural career by his relationship to the Cardinal. He had no experience with courts, and grief in exile had eaten his heart and his temper. If he were willing to forget, she was willing to forgive, and to begin all over again. She came forward calmly, and held out her hand with a formal smile. He touched her fingers coldly, not knowing what to say.

"Have you seen or heard of the pleasant Madame Patterson since?" he said after the usual greetings.

"Frequently, Marquis."

"Then she did not leave France?"

"Oh, yes, she had to keep her word, but she came back."

"I fancy that is her business: coming back."

"She is determined indeed, but so far it has brought her nothing except Empress Josephine's friendship and a brief chat with King Jerome."

"May I ask why you are here?"

"To visit my friend and patron, the Cardinal."

"By command of the Emperor, of course."

"With his permission certainly. I do not understand the remark."

"Do you recall our last meeting?"

"I have reason to recall it . . . the last!"

"God forbid that I should wrong you, whom I loved. Have you come also to explain, to remove the doubts about yourself?"

"I know of no reason for explanation."

"I do not blame you for your attachment to the Emperor. He is the greatest man in the world. But why should you for his gold trade in holy things, in order to advance his interests?"

"You will never get over that gossip, Marquis," she replied coolly. "Why have you not spoken to His Eminence about it? He would relieve your suspicions at once, he who knows everything about courts. At court only evil is spoken of the most innocent. Not even the Empress has a reputation there. What should I expect?"

"And you forbade me to investigate?"

"But you did not heed the prohibition. They who blacken every name blackened mine, and you believed them, for you inquired everywhere, until people began to think you were spying upon me. You were talked of in ridicule a long time, Marquis."

"They said of you and your brother that you are the hired advocates of the Emperor; that Monsignor Franchi, by the arts of the informer and with your aid, hopes to earn the red hat."

"His Eminence will tell you that my brother will in time enter the Sacred College by simply waiting. He does not have to play the spy for any Emperor."

"Here is the proof of your guilt: you have arrived from Paris, have you not? Well, the Emperor will be here to-morrow. Explain if you can that shining coincidence."

"I am not in charge of the Emperor's coming and going. You are becoming insane on this point. Why not ask your brother, my brother, to convince you."

His Eminence is not a fool, as you would seem to have him."

The Marquis, as we have seen, was actually hastening to that conclusion, that the diplomat knew little or nothing about his special profession. Certainly Consalvi had made a great blunder in regard to Napoleon, and why not with regard to the Franchis?

"Will not the Emperor be here to-morrow?" he persisted.

"I do not know. I left him in Paris," she answered patiently.

"Why did you forbid me to probe the story about you?"

"Because you acted upon the assumption that I was guilty, and that you must find the proof, not the truth. I do not insult you or myself by saying that you believed the slanderous gossips of the court."

"But I did believe them," he said, enraged at her calmness and his own bitterness.

"You believed them!" she exclaimed growing pale. "Is this the explanation of your coldness, of your present rage? You believed them against my declaration? You who told me so often you loved me?"

"And I think I love you still," he answered savagely, indignant with himself for his display of feeling. "Did I not hear Napoleon urge you to better work for him, against us? Have you not urged me again and again to join the Bonapartes? Is not your brother openly the imperial agent? Are not you a favorite of the Empress? Do I not recall that every visit which you paid to our house in Paris was followed by a visit from Napoleon or his agents who

heaped us with misfortunes? Not a soul at court but declared a firm belief in your secret and shameful connection with the government for our undoing."

"Secret and shameful! And you believed it," said Corona sadly.

"Explain if you can. The Emperor will be here to-morrow."

"It is for you to explain, my poor friend."

"If you cannot explain, you admit the charge, you confess that you are the spy of the Emperor."

"Clearly you are quite mad on this subject."

"Explain why the Emperor follows you here," he persisted.

She drew off her ring, the sign of her betrothal, and held it out to him, dropping it into his palm.

"There is the only explanation to which you have any right," she said with spirit. "Now you may investigate at your pleasure, and believe what the street boys say of me. It will not matter."

"As you please, Contessa Franchi," he replied choking.

"I make one request for the peace of the family. Keep this matter from His Eminence until my brother and I have gone away."

He bowed, she curtsied, and withdrew into the house. Fouché tapped the window sill with his fingers and wondered how much real difference might be between this quarrel and the wars of kings, commenting that the Contessa had steel in her composition and that the Marquis looked very much like a fool.

"We all make fools of ourselves at that age," he said.

Pierre appeared presently and laid out the materials

for a comfortable breakfast. Andrea walked moodily about the garden. At the sound of a bell the host and his guests entered from the house, surveyed the view from the garden wall, and then sat down at the table. Fouché noted with interest that a second lady was in the company, dressed like a maid, and somewhat silent, except that in greeting the Marquis she had spoken a few moments with vivacity, and Andrea had smiled considerably. Fouché could not hear her remarks, and could not recall having met her before. What she had said to Andrea went like this, with her finger on her lips.

"If you love me, do not give any sign of recognition, or mention my name. Just squeeze my hand."

"I thought you had gone back to your native wild," said the Marquis, tenderly pressing her little hand. "What a great, great pleasure."

"Thank you. Fouché was kind to me. He did not seek for me too sharply, and I lay hidden at Malmaison. I have brought news to the Cardinal."

"Come, gossips, breakfast," said Consalvi.

They sat down with some constraint, but talked sufficiently to be heard by Fouché concealed at his window.

"Now tell us the news which you have for His Eminence, Jones," said Corona with a smile. The name conveyed no information to Fouché.

"First, then, to begin at the beginning," said Jones in a thick voice which Fouché did not recognize, "the Emperor will be here to-day or to-morrow, with the usual compliments, demands, and threats."

"A woman of importance," muttered Fouché, "to have such news."

Andrea dropped his cup with a clatter and his eyes sought the pale cheeks of Corona, who refused to look at him.

"And what are to be the imperial demands?" said Consalvi.

"The Pope must surrender Rome for good, must settle at Avignon, must grant many divorces, and name his successor. Napoleon hopes to find all these things in this garden."

"Alas!" said the Cardinal.

"As I warned you, Eminence, the Emperor is determined," observed Franchi. "I did not think that he would journey to Rheims, I do not think so still. Yet if he does, it will show his earnestness."

Consalvi did not reply. He had a loaf of white bread in his hands, which he examined before he cut. Having cut it carefully he drew out a small paper from the center and slipped it into his pocket.

"We have an occasional post too, and this means important news. Not so bad for Rheims where bakers turn editors. There will be time to read it later."

Monsignor Franchi would have been well pleased to hear it read there and then, but a loud knocking at the gate in the corner of the garden, and the uproar of a deep, bass voice demanding instant admittance, checked further conversation. Cardinal Consalvi ordered Pierre to open the gate, which he did with reluctance and an expression of disgust and impatience.

"Dear friends, I ask your indulgence," said His Eminence. "This is a commissary of police who takes an official interest in my household."

As Pierre opened the gate a pompous and high-

colored officer of the local police bounced in angrily and stared and puffed at the visitors for a moment.

"Hey, priest Consalvi," he snorted, "you are at your old tricks again, I see. Open conspiracy against the Emperor. Come, your name, sir."

Drawing out paper and pencil he turned savagely on Pierre, who turned his back on him and took his place near the house.

"I have given it a dozen times, and give it no more," said he with a vicious glance at the window where Fouché studied the antics of a local police officer, drunk with the sense of power.

"Pure treason, and you shall answer for it," said the officer. "Your name, sir priest."

"Ercole Consalvi."

"What is the meaning of this assembly without permission?"

"As you see, Monsieur Billevice, a few friends at breakfast, members of the imperial court."

"A pure subterfuge! The members of the imperial court do not breakfast with traitors. Your name, sir."

"Andrea Consalvi."

"Ha, the plot thickens! Your name, sir. Another priest I see."

"Really, the Emperor shall hear of this," protested Monsignor Franchi, who could not see the humor of the scene or the character. "I do not feel disposed to give you my name."

"Then you shall be arrested within the hour."

"Rather you should fear arrest, so to treat the Cardinal Consalvi."

"This remark shows that you do not belong to the

court," said Billeviche loftily, "for Consalvi is no Cardinal."

"Marquis," began the prelate.

"Nor is he a marquis," said Billeviche.

At that moment the officer discovered Fouché standing near Pierre.

"What, more strangers!" cried Billeviche. "Come, your name, sir. And let me remind you, fellow, that I am not to be looked at thus. Your name."

"The Duke of Otranto."

"How! What! Fouché!"

"At your service, officer."

"You are joking with me," stammered Billeviche. "This is an infamous conspiracy against the Emperor."

"Away with him," said Fouché to Pierre, who seized Billeviche with iron hand and whisked him so suddenly through the nearest door that the company burst into laughter. Fouché came forward.

"Your Eminence, permit me to express profound regret for the annoyance caused you by this stupid commissary of police."

"Do not apologize, Excellency. Monsieur Billeviche has lightened many an hour for me by scenes such as you have just witnessed. And no matter how unable to prove each instance of conspiracy, he repeated the latest charge with the same ardor. The Emperor has in him a faithful officer."

"I am glad to hear you say it. I present to your Eminence the greetings of His Imperial Majesty."

"You are welcome, and I thank the Emperor."

"He has bidden me say that he will very shortly visit Your Eminence."

The Marquis glanced at Corona as if with a sword in his hand to slay. Her thoughts seemed to be with the other lady, who had busied herself about the table and had taken up a few dishes to carry into the house. When Jones had successfully vanished Corona seemed more at her ease. The Cardinal thanked Fouché for the honor about to be conferred upon him, and invited the Duke to breakfast, which Fouché declined on the excuse of pressing business. He greeted the Franchis cordially and exchanged significant words with the Marquis, whose heart bounded but whose manner remained cold, at the single sentence uttered by the magnate.

“The Emperor must see you in secret to-day at his residence.”

No other heard the glorious words which fate uttered through the mouth of a successful and despicable man. When Fouché had gone they sat down to their meal again, and Jones returned from the house smiling at her successful escape from the glance of the terrible chief of police. Her sharp eyes discovered a change in the Marquis, a deeper change in Corona, anxiety in Monsignor Franchi, and grief in the Cardinal, nor could her gaiety drive these clouds away. Fouché had spoiled the breakfast. Andrea grew impatient to seek the Emperor, Corona fretted that her brother had so far found no opportunity to counsel the Cardinal. After a constrained conversation the ladies withdrew, escorted to the door by the Marquis, and Monsignor Franchi hastened to prepare his friend for the coming interview with the Emperor. In the struggle of wits Consalvi forgot the important letter which had come to him in the loaf of white bread.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STUBBORN DIPLOMAT.

For a time the diplomats had forgotten their interest in Corona and Andrea, but as silence settled on the little garden the same thought recurred to them, and they looked on each other in grief.

"The interview was evidently not a success," said Franchi.

"I am fearing for Andrea," replied the Cardinal. "This prolonged and hopeless idleness has weakened him. The apparent failure of all my forecasts about your imperial master has filled him with regret; not at the failure, oh no! but at the lost years spent in exile, when he might have won glory at the head of an army. He is dreaming and planning, and I fear for his resolution."

"Can you blame him, Eminence? Years ago you could without danger have placed him by the Emperor's side, and Andrea would have been a poor stick indeed if in that time he had not won the very highest rank in the army."

"I appreciate his self-denial, Monsignor. He might also have been shot, in a cause not too glorious. But what has all this to do with Corona? Why should he refuse happiness of one kind anyway, since he cannot get the other?"

"It is mysterious," replied Franchi. "Corona has

no understanding of it. And he has never been accused of paying attention to any other lady."

"There is evil in the air," sighed the Cardinal. "And do you know why the Emperor has brought his dangerous shadow to this place?"

"To demand in person what he sent me to request in diplomatic phrase. I do not know that, but the information of Madame Bonaparte and the presence of Fouché lead me to believe it."

"It will be the same story, asking what I cannot give, and what I would not if I could. I dread these interviews with this untrained and volcanic genius. They begin with smiles and phrases and end with grape shot. Why does he not inform himself on what an ecclesiastic is able to do?"

"He has a good adviser in his uncle, the Cardinal Fesch."

"True indeed," and His Eminence laughed heartily. "The Cardinal-uncle is admirably fitted for his royal position. He always advises and instructs just as the Emperor desires to be instructed and advised. Now you should do better, Monsignor Franchi. You know the limitations of the law."

"Well," replied the Monsignor with some hesitation, "what the Emperor demands from you, Eminence, I would hardly consider beyond your powers. He wishes the Pope to reside at Avignon, for which there are many precedents. He wishes to rule jointly with the Holy Father, and to have the two capitals, spiritual and temporal, in France, Avignon and Paris. He asks you to help him in this divine plan. It is a tremendous invitation."

The Cardinal burst into laughter, which was against his habit, but the seriousness of his friend on a scheme which seemed to him arragant nonsense tickled him.

"And if Napoleon died the day after his divine plan went into effect, do you think it would still flourish and bear fruit?"

"But we are not talking of death, Eminence."

"Death is the test of schemes, and Napoleon will leave no successors. It is idle to talk of the King of Rome, guarded by his grandfather, the Emperor of Austria. The genius which built up the Empire of Bonaparte will require that genius for half a century to maintain it."

"It will not be wanting," declared the Monsignor with all the importance and confidence of a partisan.

"Don't be absurd," said Consalvi with the utmost good-nature.

"Don't be obstinate," replied Franchi.

"I can afford to be so long as you are absurd."

"Poor Andrea feels the burden of it. Who but Your Eminence could afford such obstinacy? You have looked at the victories of Napoleon for four years, you have seen his splendid management of France, he is warrior and statesman together, and you will not believe that he is capable of managing both Church and State in a new way as he manages Europe in a new way. Indeed I may say, the whole world."

"You are wrong, Monsignor. He has not yet learned to manage the United States, for example, your friend Madame Bonaparte."

They laughed heartily at the difficulties provided by that lady for the house of the Bonapartes.

"Nor has the Emperor yet subdued England," continued the Cardinal.

"But wait for that development, Eminence. Ah, I know that the secret of your obstinacy is England. The Emperor knows that you are thought well of by the Regent. Well, wait. When Russia has been crushed finally, like all the others, then it will be the turn of England. And what a crushing! England will then be converted into a cheese for Napoleon's table."

"Well when that event occurs, Monsignor, you may hope that I shall accept the divine plan of political redemption."

"You still believe that Napoleon will meet defeat?"

"I know nothing. The older I grow the less I seem to know. I do feel that there will be an end to Napoleon, a violent, unexpected end, like his beginning. I do know his kind. These great men who rule us little creatures of a day—"

As the Cardinal paused to take a pinch of snuff, Monsignor Franchi pursed his lips and looked about him as if to appeal to the world against this depreciation. His Eminence smiled but continued.

"These great men are blind in one direction. Was not Caesar blind to the Ides of March? Should not the French aristocracy have discounted in 1770 the Revolution of 1789? The cleverest man cannot see his own doom even when rather stupid people have guessed it. It is the safety of the multitude that the rulers are blind at one point. Otherwise we should all be slaves to such a political and military genius as Napoleon."

"And where do you consider the Emperor blind, Eminence? In what particular point?" said Franchi

blandly, for he felt that his argument was really embarrassing the Cardinal.

"He is surely blind in this dream of universal power. When he has conquered Russia, he will subdue England, which will give him the Orient. Then he must conquer the wilderness of America. After that how old will he be? How long will it take to subdue Russia?"

"This summer's campaign," said Franchi slyly.

"I suppose so, altho I had better hopes of Russia. But will the English surrender after two campaigns? They have defied him ten years, they have never recognized him, they have sworn to destroy him."

"Ah, but when their day comes what a day of destruction it will be!" said Franchi with a happy chuckle. "All the strength of Napoleon and France will be hurled in one moment on them. Do they not know it, and are they not making strenuous preparations for the hour of annihilation?"

"They do fear it," Consalvi admitted with a heart-deep groan. "Napoleon has no regard for human life, for the liberty or happiness of peoples, where his ambition is concerned. However he has not yet done with Russia, and he must win over the Pope."

"What need has he of the Pope?" said Monsignor with a superior smile.

"None that I can see, and it is all the more a mystery why at this moment he makes so much of gaining the direct alliance of Pius. Unless it is part of his game to become at some future time the spiritual head of Christianity, or for that matter, since he dreams such

things, the spiritual ruler of a new religion. His imagination cannot resist such fancies."

"That may be, Eminence, but I know that the Emperor accepts the necessity of a spiritual rule for the nations, and he finds no other like that of Rome. Therefore he wishes an alliance with Rome."

"He is wasting his time then."

"Do not be too sure."

"What do you mean by that look, that smile, that tone, Monsignor?"

"You are always slurring the power of the Emperor, Eminence, and the very instances which you select for depreciation of him are those which have shown forth his infinite ability."

The Cardinal rose suddenly with a white face and stared at the prelate.

"You do not mean to say—" he began.

"That the Pope and the Emperor have come to an understanding, yes. That Pius has presented Rome to Napoleon, yes. That His Holiness has accepted again the city of Avignon as his capital, yes. That he has concluded an alliance with the Emperor, which means, whatever the language may be, that they shall rule the world together: it is most true."

"And did you have any hand in that treaty, Monsignor?"

"Oh, do not look at me, do not speak to me so, Eminence. I am innocent. It was all done by the Emperor and the Empress, at their leisure, in charming Fontainebleau, and it has just been published to the world."

Consalvi sat down again relieved but stunned, nor could he speak for some moments. His friend chattered

on to conceal the delicacy of the situation, but he was saying to himself while describing the success of Napoleon:

"I have crushed this stubborn temper. It was indeed a blow. He must now admit that Napoleon's scheme of government is divine, even if he does not surrender at once. He will be the better prepared to accept the overtures of Napoleon. Ah, truly this Bonaparte is a magician!"

"Rome gone!" cried Consalvi, starting up suddenly, and walking the length of the garden in anguish. "Impossible! It must be taken back. Pius must retract that gift."

"A moment ago you said the Emperor must, and now you say that the Pope must. Presently Your Eminence will be telling the Almighty that He must also. Be calm, I pray you, and examine the matter."

"Fortunate for you," said the Cardinal standing before him with a savage face, "that you had no hand in this affair."

"It was done solely by the Pope, *proprio motu*," Franchi asseverated solemnly, "and no one can be charged with having brought it about. I can see just how Napoleon did it. The charm of the man is beyond belief. He knelt at the feet of Pius with the golden-haired Maria Louisa, perhaps the little King of Rome in his arms, and made Pius the gift of himself, his family, his throne, and his dynasty. The Pope is tired, as we all are, as Your Eminence is not, of this struggle against Bonaparte, against the inevitable, and he resolved to put an end to it. It is ended. You have now nothing to do but make your peace with the Emperor,

since he also desires it, and comes specially to ask peace, because of you he always thought well."

Monsignor paused with delicate emphasis on the last word.

"You will accept peace, and send Andrea forth on his career."

It mortified the prelate much to discover that the Cardinal was not listening. Consalvi had made a rapid survey of the consequences of the Pope's act, of the significance of Napoleon's visit to himself, of many courses of action to nullify the surrender of Rome. Of what avail were schemes to this end? The Pope was a prisoner in the palace of Fontainebleau, the cardinals were in exile, and correspondence was nearly impossible, as well as dangerous. If he could but get within speaking distance of Pius VII! Alas, an impossibility!

"You are not listening," said Franchi.

"Continue," said the Cardinal with a wan smile, "it is all that I am able to do amid so many calamities."

"Perhaps you may find a way out of calamity by listening," the prelate replied with tartness. "How can you be so stubborn, Eminence? You have held to this attitude ten years, since you made the Concordat. Is it not the essence of diplomacy to find a way through compromise?"

"That is the language of a cow to the butcher, Monsignor. The reply of the butcher is the axe. Napoleon practices no diplomatic art, for the Bonaparte axe saves time, argument, and money. When Napoleon descends to diplomacy it will be because the axe has grown dull, or his arm weak."

The keen eye of the Cardinal saw his friend wince under that last remark.

"No, it will be because with age he has learned the value of diplomacy, the limitations of armies and war," replied the prelate uneasily. "I urged upon him the danger of owning Rome, as I have impressed him with the danger of keeping the Pope and the Sacred College separated. He did not accept my remonstrance, but he did adopt some features of the suggested policy. Having cut the knot by the recent treaty, the Pope is free."

Consalvi felt like leaping to his feet with joy, but this time he decided to display no feeling.

"To what extent?" he asked ironically.

"He can set out for Avignon as soon as his health permits, and in the meantime the Sacred College may assemble at Fontainebleau. The governmental functions of the Church may be resumed too, and everything will be as before."

"That is something," said Consalvi quietly, but his friend raised eyes and hands towards heaven in protest to this indifference, and made a loud complaint against Consalvi, who had become again the diplomat, smiling, inscrutable, even though despairing, because the last calamity had happened. Napoleon had harnessed the Church to the Empire. His visit that morning to the little garden simply meant complete triumph, and that Consalvi must in time put on the tiara at his bidding. Well, since God permitted it why should he grieve, or oppose? Andrea might now become a king and found a dynasty, and he himself would doubtless be ruler of half the earth. In case of Napoleon's death the lessee

of this poor garden would become the regent of the world, ruling in the name of Napoleon's successor. What strange fancies! What a queer world! He looked over at Monsignor Franchi, plump, gracious, light-hearted, quite certain that any man who tries can understand the nature of all things, perfectly happy in his office of Napoleonic agent and prophet, and probably dreaming of his glorious future as the personal friend of an emperor and a pope. Are not such innocents really the happy people of the earth? Oh, what darkness gathered around him as he sat listening to Franchi's chatter, a darkness that brought the sweat to his forehead. He raised his right hand to his brow, but checked it half way, and it touched the letter, in his pocket, which he had taken from the loaf of bread. Carelessly, so that the other might not take notice, he read the secret despatch. He had time to read it twice and to think a little. Metternich was the author and his theme was Russia. For the first time Consalvi learned of the awful destruction of the grand army which Napoleon had led to Moscow and to annihilation. The day of the Bonapartes was ended. Europe was arming in concert, and another year would probably see the fall of Napoleon. Russia! The name rolled under his tongue like sugared music. Ah, now the Emperor's game stood forth in the light of day. He needed the Pope, the moral support of the treaty, of the surrender of Rome, and above all the conciliation of Catholic feeling. Oh, what a humiliation for the master of the world! He was coming as a suppliant to this poor garden, fearful that supplication would be vain. The Cardinal sighed

with pity and yet with content. He had lived to see the end.

"And now that you see the generous mind of the Emperor," Franchi concluded, "I trust, Your Eminence, that generosity instead of obstinacy will mark your share of the coming interview."

"I thank you, Monsignor, for your information and your interest," Consalvi replied. "I confess that I am weary of the situation, and that I am prepared to meet the Emperor more than half way to Russia," he added under his breath. Radiant at his unexpected success Monsignor Franchi hastened away to report to Napoleon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EMPEROR'S CUNNING.

MONSIGNOR FRANCHI was considered by his friends and superiors rather a useful than an able diplomat, who had the advantages of high birth and powerful acquaintances, could enter sanctuaries closed to more capable men, and often bring about compromises as helpful as they were unexpected. Fouché despised him because his ability did not match his conceit of it, and he listened with scorn to the prelate's report of the interview with Consalvi, seeing at once that the black Cardinal had not surrendered or changed; but he found it unnecessary to argue the point with a happy idiot like Franchi, or a wilful optimist like Napoleon. He simply remarked:

"You must bring this information at once to the Emperor, and he will thank you for your intelligent aid at a critical moment."

"Critical!" exclaimed the happy diplomat. "I have never seen such a moment in the affairs of His Majesty."

"You are too much of the courtier to see it, Monsignor," Fouché replied blandly, "but the Emperor believes the time critical, and he therefore will thank you with enthusiasm for your excellent service."

And the Emperor did, patting Franchi on the back gently, complimenting him on his address, on the tact of his sister, reminding him how firmly he had always maintained the theory that Pope and Emperor should be the twin forces of a new world, and hinting humor-

ously that the little King of Rome and the youthful Monsignor Franchi might one day succeed to the crowns of Pius and Napoleon. The Emperor had taken the prelate's measure long ago, despising him for large promise and small performance, and refusing him credit for a kind heart, a sincere devotion, many labors and much suffering. Monsignor Franchi had not yet learned, and probably could never learn, that a short man has no place among giants. Not even his beloved sister had the power to convince him of his low stature. He went away overjoyed to tell the news to Corona.

"What is your opinion of this report?" Napoleon said to Fouché.

"It has every appearance of success, except that Monsignor's reports are always happy. He used a good argument against stubborn Consalvi. He worked it up well; your steady triumphs, the new agreement with the Pope, the helplessness of Europe, and then your generous treatment of the Sacred College. The weak point in the affair is that he did not learn if Consalvi had heard of the Russian disasters."

"What if he *had* heard?"

"Consalvi would be immovable," replied Fouché calmly, too calmly the Emperor thought, for his face clouded. He could forecast a campaign, but he could not read the inscrutable faces of men like Fouché, who had already discounted his future and were leaving the sinking ship for a sounder vessel.

"He will not be so immovable after this year's campaign," said the great man in his irritation.

"I think he must have heard," Fouché continued, "altho Pierre Soulangue assured me no news had reached

him. The spy himself had not heard of the Russian disasters, in which he would have rejoiced as a fool-friend of the Revolution. But his black Eminence has had visitors, the most recent a relative of Your Majesty, Madame Patterson-Bonaparte—”

“Did you arrest her?”

“No, but she is at your disposal any moment. She is a remarkably bright woman, and usually has all the news wherever she happens to be—”

“What, have you met her before, Fouché?”

“She had a place in the solemnities of your marriage at the Louvre,” replied Fouché maliciously. “Of course at that time it would have been impossible to trouble her, except by conducting her out of the country with a warning. She had Jerome’s protection, I think. Being in Rheims she called this morning on the Cardinal, and may have given him the news. I suspect he had it earlier.”

“Doubtless. We shall see. You will now arrest this young woman, and confine her where she will be of no annoyance. She should not be in France at all.”

“If I may offer a suggestion, she is of a temperament that cannot be kept out of France. She is also ambitious and in love with the glories of court life. Why not place her at court, under proper guardianship, and marry her to a noble. She will have many suitors at first sight, and marriage would end all annoyances.”

At that moment came a knock at the door and after it an aide-de-camp to say that the Marquis Consalvi awaited the pleasure of the Emperor.

“Conduct him here at once,” said the Emperor with a glance at Fouché, who nodded and smiled, saying:

"The young man has just broken with the past, has thrown over his brother, whose prophecies of your inevitable downfall have disgusted him, and is about to seek glory at your side."

Altho the Emperor laughed at this description of the facts, inwardly he writhed at the phrasing of Fouché, which declared the downfall inevitable and ridiculed the fool who sought glory at Napoleon's side.

"I shall marry him to Patterson," said the Emperor gaily.

Fouché went out one door as Andrea came in at another. The Minister of Police had instructions to arrest Elisabeth Patterson and to send her under military escort to Fontainebleau.

Andrea Consalvi in the presence of his idol found himself a light-hearted man, very different from the exile of Rheims, the gloomy companion of his eminent brother. Before this sun of glory all vapors vanished in an instant. All his doubts and hesitations, his fear of compromising the Cardinal, of being thought disloyal, of injuring the family honor, disappeared, and he knew from the joy which flooded his breast that he should have taken this step long ago. He adored this Emperor, this pale, small man, with the face of a seraph, the delicacy of a woman, the eyes of Jove. It seemed like the bliss of heaven to be standing here at his invitation, knowing that hereafter he should be always in his service. The Cardinal had been unable, like most of the sages of that time, to impress his brother with the right view of this extraordinary man. His Eminence had often described the horrors of the Napoleonic wars, the fearful slaughter of innocent men, the shocking

sights of the battle-field, the hospital, the retreat, the encampment, the desolate homes robbed of their richest treasures, the long, long grief of parents, widows, orphans, friends, the heavy burden of taxation on the poor, the demoralization of social life. Few thought of such things, and could not understand the argument. War was thought necessary and glorious, its leaders seized the highest honors of their time. Not even the horrors of the Russian disaster had seriously affected the glory of Napoleon, then or since, for he still remains the admired hero of a sublime romance. The whole world would consider a little Italian Marquis very fortunate to receive the attention and the affection of the greatest military genius of the day. Andrea had grieved at first to see how foolish the Cardinal's views of Napoleon had been, how vain his prophecies; then he had worried lest service under the Emperor would look like desertion of his brother; but with Napoleon smiling upon him affectionately he knew that hesitation was foolish, delay criminal, and that his long exile had been lost time. A man knows better than his relatives what is good for himself. He knelt at the feet of the Emperor and kissed his hand.

"I have come, Sire, to place my poor services at your command, and to ask pardon for the long delay in responding to your kindness," he said brokenly.

"Ah, I understand, and I do not blame you," Napoleon replied, stooping to kiss his cheek with the affection of a father. "On the contrary I praise the devotion which has held you, in spite of temptation so strong, in obedience to the head of the family. Rise, my son, and sit here beside me, while we discuss your future."

The tears flowed down the cheek of the young man. He loved this man, he thought, far more than the brother who had cared for him, educated him, loved him a score of years with almost a mother's strength. So easily is youth won by glitter. It never occurred to the Marquis, in his emotion, that if he died that night, Napoleon would not lose his appetite for dinner or give his memory the second word of praise; while his stricken brother would bury his body with many tears, carry his memory in his heart forever, pray for him till speech failed, and never escape from the shadow of his death. The Emperor had enjoyed to the full this adoration of the young, an enjoyment which never lost its flavor for him. It had made him a power with the people, overcoming the prudence of the sages, the grief of parents, the hostility of the Bourbon princes, who could make no headway against the Napoleonic tradition. This young Marquis represented the youth of the world, who burned to fight under his banner, the passionate, adoring, foolish youth, who perished with joy in the light of his smile.

"I sent for you," said the Emperor, pressing his hands as they sat side by side, "but first you shall tell me what is in your heart. I have heard that you had resolved to come to me, in spite of your brother's foolish attitude."

"Oh, you heard that," said Andrea joyfully, "but I had spoken it to no one save myself."

"Your looks showed it, my child. Youth cannot conceal its thought like the old."

"Yes, I had made up my mind to offer myself to you, knowing that I would not be accepted."

"How could you know that?"

"From the sense of justice, Sire. More than once you had offered me honor and glory and I had not the courage or the sense to understand and accept. Why should you then delay a moment to notice a fool? But I saw the blunder I had made, and I had to make one effort to mend it or die of grief. Even though you rejected me I had to make reparation to myself, if I could not make it to Your Majesty."

"A very just thought."

"And while I studied the means to reach you, Sire, there came the Duc d'Otranto to tell me that you were here, and that you wished to see me."

"I am glad to have given you so much happiness. You have had so little in exile."

"And I am here to thank you, and to say that if nothing else happened to me in this world, the memory of this meeting will make my life beautiful forever, and fill it with joy. I offer my poor service. I make my act of contrition for the sins of weakness. I promise to do better."

"Ah, my dear, my most dear son, how the heart speaks in you!"

"I am not worthy to be called your son, Sire."

"You shall have the chance to prove your worth. But now we must also consider your dear brother, the Cardinal. What will he say to all this?"

"What he has said so often: impossible! But now having served his pleasure to the limit of endurance I must act for myself."

"You have assuredly fulfilled your duty in this long, unnecessary exile. You have given your brother's

prophecies of my fate time to prove their correctness. I think even that stern cleric must admit your fidelity, praise your patience, and absolve you from the charge of undue haste."

"That stern cleric, Sire, will never forgive me for this desertion, not of him, but of his folly."

"His folly! Ah, rightly named! And such a man to yield to folly! You know, do you not, that your brother is among the greatest of his time? I look to him to succeed His Holiness, the present Pope, whose temperament and health alike unfit him for his lofty position."

"I have heard that Cardinal Consalvi is a very able man," Andrea said proudly, "but of late I have begun to doubt his ability. I am no judge of such a matter, Sire, but I have to choose between Your Majesty and my brother. The whole world has accepted the genius which resides in you, Sire, but it has not done so for my brother. And so I have decided for myself that it is safer to stand by the greater man."

Napoleon laughed and pinched the boy's glowing cheek.

"A wise decision, which even Consalvi must approve," he said. "Still your brother is really a great man, not so much in his political sagacity as in his temper. He could be Pope next week by raising his hand. He declines because he does not regard the method of reaching the throne a fair one, or alliance with me safe and profitable. The cleverest man is blind in some things."

"How often I have heard my brother say the same thing of you, Sire."

"Ah, indeed!"

"It was his only defence against my argument, Sire, that you are blind in one direction. If you can see failure for the Emperor, I would say, why cannot the Emperor see it for himself, since admittedly he is the superior of any man living."

"Blind in one direction," repeated Napoleon gravely, as he looked into space, considering the thought. Long afterward these two men, the idol and the worshipper, recalling the truism of the Cardinal and this particular moment, declared that two more vivid examples of its truth than themselves could not at that instant have been found in the whole world; for the great Emperor had decided, against the opinions of his best friends, on the policy which hurled him to destruction; and the little Marquis, against the warnings of his brother, had thrown in his lot with the Emperor only to share in that tremendous fall. Yet never had their thought and action, in their own estimation, so smacked of prudence and wisdom.

"I compliment you on your courage, Marquis," said Napoleon abruptly, "and I am glad that there will be no necessity for opposing your eminent brother. I have good news for him and you. The Pope and I have come to an amicable agreement, and in consequence your exile is over. Consalvi and his household, after our interview to-day, will set out for Fontainebleau, where he will resume his old functions beside the Pope."

"Thank God I have seen this reconciliation."

"It leaves you free to accept honors from me," continued the Emperor kindly, "and you are hereby appointed colonel and aide-de-camp on my staff."

"Only a life of devotion can repay this kindness."

"Yet it is only the beginning. The future looks so large for His Eminence that a Consalvi may look at a crown without blinking. You will set out at once to Fontainebleau, leaving me to tell all to your brother."

"Oh, now I begin to live."

"Poor child, you have indeed suffered. Fouché has arranged for you to conduct Madame Patterson, who is now arrested, to Fontainebleau. You will have a company of dragoons under your command for the purpose. There is no harm threatening Madame Patterson. The Pope is soon to nullify her marriage with King Jerome, and then she will take her place at court. Guard her well, and do not delay."

With rapture Andrea knelt once more before the Emperor, kissed repeatedly the delicate hands with their diamond rings, and flew like a winged god to his first military duty under the great leader. Napoleon felt a glow in his heart, as if fire had reached it, from contact with the love, enthusiasm, and veneration of the young man.

"They inspire me, as Fouché and Talleyrand depress me. A million like him in France are ready to follow where I lead. Why then should I lose heart before the rats, the timid counsellors, and other creatures around me? Blind in one direction! Ah, how true! That blindness is part of our nature. It is the most necessary wisdom to know that, and to discover where we are blind. I shall learn it of Consalvi."

In good spirits he set out for his interview with the calm, stubborn, far-seeing Cardinal.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN INVITATION TO A WEDDING.

THE Emperor knew clearly the mind of Consalvi, his political theories, and his present attitude. Men felt Consalvi to be, what he was popularly named afterwards, the greatest diplomat in Europe. Only the diplomats could explain the reasons for this belief. His strength lay in the fact that his principles permitted no compromise in one direction, that he had no personal ambitions to serve, and that his resources were sure if few. What did Napoleon hope from this stubborn man? He scarcely knew. It was necessary that he should be doing something to impress that Europe which was now arming against him. His treasury had no funds, his people were exhausted, his armies fagged out, and his generals weary of war. The coming campaign would have to be decided by one great battle, with defeat so awful for his enemies that surrender would be speedy. Meanwhile he had impressed part of the world with his triumph over the Pope in coaxing him to settle in Avignon. If he could now say to courts and diplomats, Consalvi is on my side, he is to succeed Pius VII, the weak would be strengthened and the strong weakened by his success. The tiara was no bribe to a mind like Consalvi's, but the opportunity to help in ending the continental wars, to restore government

to the Church and peace to the nations, might induce Consalvi to yield. As he rode his temper changed to its usual gloomy tone. With all his confidence in his star he could not conceal from himself that the future looked threatening.

"A pope of Consalvi's temper and skill," he said to himself, "is needed to support my prestige and to dam the torrent let loose by the Moscow tragedy. Oh, that failure ruined me. France is faithful but tired, the ministers can do nothing until I have won another victory, the funds are lacking. I must get the support of this Consalvi. Does he know of my lost army? Oh, Russia, Russia, give me back my legions."

He dreamed of those unhappy legions, the simple and the brave, who had perished in the cold with his name on their blue lips, whose flesh and bones had enriched the soil of Russia, who had loved him even while he gave them over to a horrible death; they passed through his imagination in long lines, ragged, hungry, exhausted, but warm-hearted still, saluting him as they passed on to death. With this picture in his mind he entered the little garden, where Consalvi waited, strengthening his mind against the coming onslaught with the very thought which floated in Napoleon's brain. As the two saluted each other, Consalvi said to himself, behold the brother of death! and the Emperor said to himself, behold the antidote to Moscow!

"Your majesty is welcome," said the Cardinal briefly and coldly.

"I see that you have enjoyed your exile," replied Napoleon.

"Very much, Sire, and I confess to the hope that the

obscurity in which you placed me so kindly would have wiped out all remembrance—”

“Of the cardinal whom I ordered shot,” interrupted the Emperor. “Ah, few can forget Consalvi.”

“Few have remembered him, Sire. It is all the more gracious of Your Majesty to honor me with this visit. It is a great deal for the poor to look at the rich, since they will never get any closer to riches.”

“You are still a rich man, Eminence. Have you not health, friends, even a future? And are you not Consalvi? In stripping you of your red robes and making you the black cardinal,” looking with a smile at the plain black cassock, “I took nothing of real value from you. Wait until I begin to strip you in earnest.”

“Your Majesty perhaps would like to make a martyr of me?”

“Something as good: I would like to make you pope. But come, I smell the odor of coffee. Let us have it, for I am in excellent humor this morning.”

They sat down in the arbor and Pierre filled the cups. The two men sipped and wondered as they exchanged commonplaces, Napoleon suspecting that the other knew of Moscow, Consalvi amazed at the good health, sound nerves, and cheerfulness of this brother of death. Was Napoleon, as many believed, something of a monster? His melancholy eyes sought to learn something from the inscrutable face of Consalvi.

“I have come with sincere terms for you, Consalvi,” said he, “and also to hear plain speech from a diplomat.”

“Plain speech lives only among the innocent, and is an impossibility for diplomats and courtiers. Nor are they to blame, since princes have not the skin to stand

such draughts of wind, and must shut the door on them. It is perhaps a provision of nature that they are so sensitive, so that their great power can easily be controlled by the moral force of their own blunders."

"You have your own philosophy I see. Well, since I cannot command of you plain speech, I beg of you to give it freely."

"Then I cannot refuse, Sire."

"You are kind, Eminence. I have come to tell you that your exile has ended, which you know already, that you are to resume your robes of office, and set out at once for Fontainebleau, where the free Pope will give you your old place. What do you think of all this?"

"First, permit me to ask the reason of this change."

"I am tired of eating pope, which I did not cook. Cardinal Fesch has me weary with his protests against what he calls an imprisonment, and is forever warning me that they who eat pope usually die of it. Anyway I can dispense with the friendship of this infirm weakling, and repose comfortably on the victories past, present and to come."

He cast a sly look at the Cardinal who did not betray the thought, sad and amusing together, which entered his mind: at last the great man had descended to rank imposture.

"Moreover I long for peace," continued the Emperor. "Once I have crushed those who still hunger for my bones I shall establish a peace more real and splendid than that of Augustus, because it will endure. But these are mere words. Here is the main question: will you become pope after Pius?"

"To what end?" said the calm tones of His Eminence, as if Napoleon had offered him a trip to Paris.

"To work with me for universal empire and universal peace."

"Universal empire means war, Sire, and so your words contradict your intentions and plans."

"You think such an empire impossible?"

"How much nearer are you to it than in 1810? Have you subdued England and captured the Orient?"

"These things are to come," replied Napoleon calmly.

"You cherish a dream, Sire. There will never again be a universal empire, even if England surrenders."

"I know your opinion on that subject, but reply to my question: will you be pope after Pius?"

"I am to be candid with Your Majesty?"

"As with God, for if any human being can afford candor you are the man. Give me the full thought of your mind, I beg of you."

Consalvi hesitated a moment, between his sense of duty and his fine appreciation of the diplomatic consequences.

"Personally I see no advantage in playing second to any monarch," he replied in a musing way, while the flashing eyes of the Emperor devoured him. "Understand, Sire, that I am speaking from the economic point of view. In such a team one man dominates, and all experience shows that with Your Majesty in the team the other man fades."

"Because most men have not the stuff to stand up for themselves," replied Napoleon. "I ask you because you will not submit to domination from me or any other."

I shall have to compromise, but when we have compromised you will carry out your side of the contract to the letter. I know what you are doing now. You are raising the price on me. Talleyrand says that every man has his price, and statecraft must discover it."

"Talleyrand has never lacked the wisdom of the serpent. However, in this case I think he is right."

"Then name yours, Consalvi, for the love of God."

"The freedom of the Church—"

"You have it."

"At Avignon, Sire?" and the Cardinal smiled.

"You shall have it at Rome, at Constantinople, at Antioch, at Jerusalem, my friend. It matters not so that you wear the tiara."

"Your Majesty is generous. Then an immediate end to these desolating wars, which are eating the very marrow of Europe and civilization."

"That is my aim, and it will be achieved by universal empire, in which you will be the spiritual head and I the temporal."

"That dream I cannot support," said the Cardinal firmly. "Have you forgotten the Revolution and the Terror?"

"Does a sane man worry over a nightmare?"

"Ah, Sire, you seem in this to be as ordinary as Metternich and Pitt. They have not been able to see that with the year 1789 the history and the method of statecraft changed their very essence. The world shall never again be ruled in the old fashion. It will not submit either to moral grandeur, or to sublime force, or to military power."

"You are putting me off," said Napoleon, losing his temper. "You are not a statesman, Consalvi, and perhaps you take me for a fool. Have you learned nothing since our last meeting?"

"A great deal," replied the other thoughtfully, but he did not say what he had learned. Yet the Emperor's face flushed with rage and disappointment.

"You will not be pope then after Pius?" he said angrily.

"That is as God wills, Sire. It is hardly a pleasant position at any time, and yoked with Your Majesty—"

"Nonsense! Let us end this foolish talk. You refuse my offer. Well, go take your place at Avignon, where your stubbornness will find stones enough to break on. After a course in Avignon statecraft you will probably have learned what you should have learned studying my victories: that universal empire is no dream: that I shall achieve it: that the Revolution died when I was born: that it gave birth to me: and that I shall complete what it began, the destruction of petty monarchy. What have you learned in your exile?"

"The limitations of your power, Sire," replied Consalvi, gazing at the burning face of the Emperor calmly. "And you should have learned them too, even here, with the most helpless man in France. You have failed either to bribe, or even to interest me. You asked for plain speech, you received it, and yet you have not had the strength to bear it. It is poor reward for candor to be called names."

"Ah, you can afford to be insolent," snapped the Emperor. "Well, let us see. Fouché must be here somewhere."

He left the arbor roughly and rushed into the house calling Fouché. At the same moment Corona leaned out of a window and beckoned to the Cardinal, who hastened to obey her passionate gesture. She whispered her message.

"They have arrested Madame Bonaparte, and sent her under escort to Fontainebleau. I saw them set out, and Andrea was at the head of the escort. They told me he was the Colonel Consalvi, aide-de-camp to the Emperor."

The Cardinal struck his hands together in anguish and then pressed them to his breast.

"I see, I see, Corona," he whispered back. "This monster has begun his work, he has tricked Andrea, bought him with some bribe that would tempt a seraph, and we have lost him. You were always on Bonaparte's side, and I have tried to deal most generously with him, yet see how he slays us both. Do you not see? He has won the lad with a uniform, and it looks to me as if . . . "

Corona withdrew before the sentence was finished, for the Emperor came back suddenly. He was surprised to find Consalvi quite pale, with the sweat on his forehead.

"Here are your precise instructions, Consalvi," he said harshly, watching the prelate's emotion. "I know that you measure the Russian campaign with Metternich's tape, but you should wait for the new measure which I shall give that dancing-master in the Spring."

"I have my own tape," replied Consalvi with difficulty. "For that tremendous tragedy I have only sympathy—"

"Silence," thundered Napoleon, "I do not seek sympathy from enemies."

"And I keep mine for those who deserve it," returned Consalvi bitterly. "Every soldier of France that bled, froze and starved to death in Russia, to build your universal empire, his soul cries to heaven for vengeance against you. It is with these helpless, noble, unhappy victims of ambition and folly I sympathize."

"I asked for candor and I get an extra dose of it," laughing.

"I have been dumb long enough. Is it not time to speak? Russia has set me free. It has even avenged us. You offered me a crown when your own lies buried in the snows of Russia. You gave the Church over to disorder, the Pope to exile, and me to want and shame, but God has surrendered you to Russia. Emperor, after this I shall strike when you strike, insult when you insult."

Fouché and Corona suddenly rushed forward.

"He has gone mad," whispered the Minister.

"Oh, my dear friend, remember where you are," pleaded Corona. For the Cardinal's pallor had increased and he looked old and distracted. The Emperor watched him with a curious eye, unable to explain this sudden change from coldness to passion, from sanity to madness.

"The carriage is waiting, Sire, let us go," said Fouché.

"Madman, I told you a moment ago that you had much left to tempt the greed of a king," shouted Napoleon.

"Andrea is gone," replied Consalvi, as tears began

to course down his cheeks, but only Corona heard the sad words.

"You have health, reputation and friends," the Emperor went on.

"Russia devours yours," cried Consalvi loudly.

"I begin with your friends—"

"You shall end with Russia," shouted the Cardinal more fiercely, advancing on the Emperor.

"I begin with that most faithful friend, your brother—"

"You shall answer for every hair of his head, Emperor."

Fouché interposed between the two men and Corona delayed the advance of the Cardinal by seizing his arm.

"He has deserted you for place and love beside his Emperor," and Napoleon could not resist the sneering laugh which accompanied his words. Corona looked at him in astonishment.

"True, true," said Consalvi, shrinking, "but you shall die deserted of God and man, and the dead soldiers of the Russian graveyard will curse you as you depart to your master."

"He is indeed mad," cried the Emperor turning on his heel, but pausing at the door. "I command you, Consalvi—"

"Only by leave of the Czar," replied the Cardinal with a loud laugh.

"Oh, Sire, do not torture him," urged Fouché.

"What in the name of God has happened to him?" said Napoleon, who smarted under the lashes of the distracted prelate. "A moment ago he was as cold as you, Fouché, and much saner."

"Probably he has heard of his brother's lapse from grace."

"Ah, indeed! of course. Consalvi, two weeks hence you will appear at Fontainebleau, to attend the nuptials of Colonel the Marquis Consalvi with your protégée, Madame Patterson, the cast-off mistress of King Jerome."

And with that shot the great man departed leaving Corona weeping in silence and the Cardinal utterly broken, hysterical, and beside himself at the blackness of the tragedy which had overtaken his beloved brother. The two mourners could hear the Emperor laughing as he passed through the house to his carriage.

"So Satan laughs at the sorrows of men," murmured the Cardinal.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRISONERS OF FONTAINEBLEAU.

MADAME PATTERSON-BONAPARTE enjoyed her dubious position in the palace of Fontainebleau for many reasons, but chiefly because it ranked with the Pope's. They were the prisoners of Fontainebleau. His Holiness had a section of the palace to himself, with dignitaries and servants according to his station; the obstinate wife of Jerome lived obscurely in the apartment of a maid of honor, did her own mending, and saw only the lesser functionaries. She was treated with the utmost respect, and addressed as Madame Elisabeth, allowed the freedom of one section of palace and garden, provided with many innocent luxuries, and given to understand that better times were coming for her. One visitor had free access, the glittering Marquis Consalvi. She had more leisure than was good for her, than she knew how to use, except in useless speculations on the past, present and future of her confused existence.

"This however is better than Malmaison," she admitted to Andrea.

"And how is it better?" he asked, not caring much to know, but for the sake of conversation with this charming, inexplicable woman.

"I had no political existence with that dear, good,

suffering woman, Josephine, being just a hunted criminal for Fouché to imprison. Here I am a state prisoner, in company with the Pope. Just think of the English papers and the American too announcing that Madame Patterson-Bonaparte is confined at the palace of Fontainebleau. Isn't that beautiful?"

"It might be if the papers had the news," said Andrea wickedly, "but in this instance not a soul knows that you are here except the few who do not tell tales."

"I sent out letters," she said, and he laughed. "Ah, I see. They were intercepted, of course. Then you must do me a favor, Marquis."

"Do you forget, Madame Elisabeth, that I am aide-de-camp to His Majesty?" replied the Marquis with mock severity.

"How can I?" she complained, "when you come every day in a different uniform, and each so staggering that I can hardly speak to you. I never dreamed a mere little Roman Marquis could look so exalted, so sublime, really."

"And what will you feel when I shall have won my honors in the war that is coming? when I enter with the titles, the medals, the gold braid, the general splendor of a marshal? The Empress tells me that I must be a marshal very soon. Napoleon hints at it every time we meet. How will you stand such glory then?"

"And you see the Empress often, and the Emperor?"

"Naturally, as aide-de-camp," he said proudly.

"My, my, but you are carried away with your honors! And what will His Eminence say to all this when he appears at court?"

"What can he say but congratulate me on my suc-

cess? After all, I owe it to my dear brother and not to myself. The Emperor would not look a second time at me but for my relationship to the Cardinal."

"But what I fail to understand is the change of front on the part of His Eminence, who is anything but a changeable personage."

"All due," said the Marquis airily, "to the charm of the Emperor, and to his political tact. The differences between Pope and Emperor have been wiped out. There is to be no more fighting. The Cardinals are coming every day from all parts of the world to attend the Pope freely. That is why I could accept an army position from the Emperor without compromising my brother."

"I am glad that my dear brother-in-law is so kind to you," she said. "Does he inquire for me at all?"

"Regularly, and tells me that your day is coming, that your position at court is assured, with many other nice things which show his good will. It is certainly a great change for us both. A few weeks ago I was moping and dying, in an old suit, complaining to His Eminence by look and word, and you were a mere American dodging Fouché. Today—"

He looked about at the gorgeous apartment where they sat, then at his fine uniform, finally at contemplative Betty, who laid down her sewing and counted on her fingers.

"First at the walls, then at the uniform, and last of all at me! Oh, how old and faded I must have grown in my trouble when a Roman nobleman ranks a fellow-prisoner of the Pope below his uniform!"

"Everything has its value," he replied calmly. "We

look first and last at you, Madame Elisabeth. We forget the frescoes and throw away the uniform because it fades, but you no one forgets, for you do not fade, or grow old, or lose your essence."

"Thank you for being so nice," and something in his fervent tone brought a little blush to her cheek. "I should not wonder if in this gay court you would learn to flirt a little. I feel that you have changed some since your arrival here."

"Some!" he repeated, rising to march about the room. "Why, Madame, my life is revolutionized! I do not know myself, from this light and joy within me. I would not go back to exile for all the—"

"Principles of Consalvi," she continued at his significant pause.

"I had made up my mind," he said resuming his seat, "to get away from Rheims and to join the Emperor, or to join something where life could leap in my dull veins. You have no idea how after three years of routine in Rheims life died out in me."

"I have a very clear idea, Marquis, for I spent most of that same time in Malmaison, waiting and hoping for that which never came."

"Ah, yes, we have had precisely the same trial," he replied with a tender look. "I had forgotten that. But like you I came to the point where endurance was no longer possible. It mattered not to me at that moment whether peace was made between Emperor and Cardinal. I resolved to throw in my lot with the Emperor, and I was saved from a necessary lapse by the luck of the time."

"First luck which you have had in years," said she.

"No, the second," he replied with another tender glance, which made Betty laugh heartily.

"Are you really making love to me, Marquis?" said she sweetly.

"I do not need to in this place, which swarms with youthful beauties. Wait till you see the maids-of-honor before whom I march every hour that I am on duty. You will not then interpret every glance as a declaration of love."

"Thank you. I shall repay that remark when it comes my turn to march every hour before the gallants of the court. I am glad that the Emperor speaks well of me. At the same time I am full of apprehension. This sudden change for the better seems to me full of danger. I do not trust Bonaparte."

"Because you do not know him."

"I not know him!"

"Oh, of course, you have every reason to detest the great man, but really and truly there is in him something so winning that I get mushy thinking of him. I know that in battle I would die laughing if his eyes were fixed on me. I have heard that said of his soldiers. He inspires you. He is wonderful."

"Everything is wonderful to a greenhorn," Betty said shrewdly. "Tell me this: did you see your brother before we set out from Rheims?"

"No. The Emperor bade me make haste to escort you hither. He said that he would make all the explanations to the Cardinal."

"And you have not heard from him since?"

"No, for His Eminence will be here shortly to take his old place as Secretary of State."

"Well, it may be all right, but the lying I have seen at court in my brief acquaintance with it—they call it diplomacy—leaves me suspicious of the Emperor himself."

"Oh, Madame Bonaparte," Andrea replied in a tone of reproach.

"Well, be on your guard. You admit you are often mushy. I was once. I have recovered; and I mean to stay so."

Thus the two badgered each other in daily conversation, but neither had any doubt that their ships had at last come home. The Marquis Consalvi trod on air and dreamed angelic dreams day and night. Being a handsome, well-set up youngster, courteous and very gay, with all the Roman vivacity, he had at once become a court favorite, petted by the ladies, envied by his equals, courted by the great men of Paris. These understood clearly the plans of Napoleon with regard to Cardinal Consalvi, who was to be the next pope, and would soon be on the throne, and whose only brother might be considered a king of the coming decade. The ambitious esteemed him as the luckiest man of the year. Emperor and Empress made much of him. His love for the former had no bounds. Napoleon had intoxicated the lad, a feat quite easy, natural and frequent with the son of the Corsican lawyer. The devotion of years to the theories of his brother now looked foolish to Andrea, a waste of time, while the acumen of Monsignor Franchi looked like genius compared with the obstinate attitude of Consalvi. When he encountered Monsignor Franchi in Paris he made haste to flatter him, not knowing how dismally the diplomat

had failed in Rheims, and how low his favor stood at court. Monsignor did not dare to approach the Emperor, but kept smiling like Talleyrand, never admitting disgrace or defeat. He did not know whether the Marquis represented treason or change of policy. His position of favorite was undoubted however, and Monsignor Franchi agreed with everything Andrea uttered, leaving him without suspicion as to the last scenes between Emperor and Cardinal. No mention was made of the Contessa Corona. That quiet dream had come to a tragic end. In the brilliant and lively court it no longer gave Andrea a twinge, for he had begun to see that a courtier may have many similar experiences before love makes him prisoner for life.

Madame Bonaparte studied the situation closely, for experience had made her distrustful of first impressions and surface incidents. The beauty of life at Fontainebleau enchanted her. There seemed no end to the delightful scenes occurring there day after day in the midst of so much loveliness. The great came and went with all the dash and color of the stage. Music colored the darkness of the night, troops flashed across the open spaces to the sound of the bugle, and once in a while she caught a glimpse of the white figure of the Pope among the flowers of his garden. They too, the gentle old man and the lonely American girl, were the prisoners of Fontainebleau, deprived of their crowns and their estates, mere shadows on the glory of the palace. Well, that was something, said Betty with a laugh at her own conceit. Pius VII dreamed of getting back to Rome and she dreamed of getting back her Jerome. Was this palace a stepping-stone to greater glory? Hope

said yes, and experience no. The spell of court life Betty had never escaped from, after her enchanting but minor part in the scenes at the Louvre three years previous. She imagined that if once her feet were fairly planted in that garden of delights her happiness would be complete, life would fill up with sunshine, and darkness never be known again. Her practical nature warned her against this delusion. Had she not seen the tears of Josephine in Malmaison? and heard the stories of broken hearts in the highest places? but like a child she continued to cherish the vain thought, and to dream of the happiness that must come with the pleasures, riches, glories, sports, and companionships of a famous court. It would come through Jerome of course, but when she brought her hero before the court of common sense, interrogated him as to ways and means, and asked him point blank how he intended to drop Queen Caroline and make Betty Patterson his true queen, there was no answer. It could not be done even by so great a power as love; unless Jerome fled from Europe back to the wilderness, and that she did not desire; or, unless the Empire went to smash, which was unlikely and not to be desired. She wished to live at court, to be hand and glove with the notables of the day, and to write letters home to Dolly Mannors filled with her glory. Why had she been made a prisoner and located amid scenes so glorious? Was not Napoleon contemplating her indemnification for so much suffering? Her shrewdest speculation found no sufficient answer to the question, until Monsignor Franchi appeared one day in her little salon. She liked him because he had been kind, indulgent, and helpful to her,

for the sake of his friend and patroness, the Empress Josephine. Moreover he had all the virtues of the Roman patrician and ecclesiastic, elegant manners, distinguished bearing, courteous deference to others. As a diplomat he had only one merit, persistence. Nothing discouraged him, and he was often useful, always courageous. With his mediocre ability he had to be courageous, to bear the scorn of the clever and to carry defeat with dignity. Betty felt that his life was bound to be a sad one at the finish.

"So kind of you, Monsignor," she murmured in her sweetest tone. "And of course you can tell me, if anyone can, why I am here in this fashion, and what the Emperor is going to do with me?"

"I can tell you what everyone knows at court," he replied, "that I have not dared to approach His Majesty since my return from Rheims."

"And why have you not dared, Monsignor? You, his friend?"

"Ah, Madame Bonaparte, we are only his friends while we can bring him rich tribute. I failed on my visit to Cardinal Consalvi. A double failure! I knew that the Cardinal could not be moved from his attitude. I found him however more flexible than usual, he expressed a willingness to treat with the Emperor, and I reported that willingness as almost a surrender."

"I thought you knew His Eminence better."

"I know him very well, but permitted myself to be deceived by my own wishes. Never did he prove more obstinate, more hateful to the Emperor. They had an awful time of it, and when his Majesty was leaving Consalvi actually shouted at him: Russia!"

"Then tell me: why is the Marquis Consalvi here as the friend and favorite of Napoleon, the hero of the hour, named as the coming lucky man?"

She spoke with vehemence and Monsignor looked at her curiously, as if he doubted the sincerity of the question, but he replied without hesitation.

"I have not dared to question him, because such questions often reach the Emperor. He left Rheims with you while the diplomats were muddling things—"

"As usual," said she.

"As usual," he repeated. "I know that he had made up his mind to join Napoleon's court, and the recent reconciliation of Pope and Emperor helped him. But his position is astonishing. He is the favorite."

"So is mine, Monsignor."

"Have you not connected the two astonishments in your speculations?"

"Never. Ah, now I see you do know something. Out with it, my friend."

"It is but a mere report," he said with hesitation, "and I cannot vouch for it. The last word of the Emperor to Consalvi was a bitter invitation and command for him to appear shortly at Fontainebleau to attend the nuptials of his brother Andrea with Madame Patterson-Bonaparte."

The shocks of ten years had steeled Betty to surprises, but this took her off her feet, and she fell into almost hysterical laughter.

"You do not believe it?" Monsignor said somewhat mortified.

"I know it, Monsignor. Oh, the art of this incomparable Napoleon. He dangles the tiara before Con-

salvi, a crown before the Marquis, and a court marriage before me, to destroy us and reduce us to his creatures. He has failed with the Cardinal and he will fail with me, but with the Marquis he will make a success. Go, Monsignor, warn the Cardinal, and hurry him hither. I will give you a letter which you must see safely delivered to King Jerome. If we are to beat the Emperor we shall have to sit up nights."

When the Monsignor departed Betty recalled the warning of Cardinal Consalvi: that the Emperor had many ways of disposing of her besides prison and exclusion from France: that he might kill her quietly, or marry her to a pliable courtier so to hold her down. She had to admit that he was doing it handsomely in the plan to marry her to the handsome, lovable Marquis, who might soon be brother to the reigning pope and a king! Then she laughed again!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE EMPEROR'S RECREATION.

GREAT as was the genius of Napoleon in certain directions he always remained as much a mystery to himself as to others. He found depths, in that personality with which God had endowed him, too deep for his sharp eye, and complexities too tangled for an audacious and irreverent mind to solve. He could not explain to himself why he bothered with the Pope, with Consalvi, with the Marquis and with Madame Patterson, as he called her, who were the midgets of his court, mere flies on the wheel at that moment. His Empire was on the verge of a precipice, perhaps *the* precipice; he had no money for the summer campaign, and could borrow none, except by force from his rich relatives; his sole hope of success over the league forming against him lay in a single crushing defeat of its armies, with the consequent capture of cities and rich treasuries, and a truce or a long peace; his ambassadors and diplomats could get no terms anywhere, no concessions, no alliances, no money, because Russia had beaten him; yet in this desperate hour he could play with destiny, and plot against the poor souls from whom he had taken everything. To him his plots looked like beneficence, and thus he presented them to

the sufferers. About the time Betty discovered his plan to marry her to the Marquis, Napoleon paid a visit to the Pope in his quiet but sumptuous apartments. He had a spark of affection for the old man who had crowned him, and treated him with the deference of a loving son. When he entered the room preceded by a prelate, he knelt at the feet of the venerable pontiff and kissed his hand. Four years of imprisonment had inflicted the usual penalties on Pius VII. Never very strong the calamities of his reign had weakened his constitution still more. Without advisers and with little reliable news from the world outside, he had become the prey of his own fancies and the innocent tool of his imperial colleague. When the Emperor discussed with him the problems of government, the old man felt that Pope and Emperor ruled the world as in the golden days of Charlemagne. When alone, and the actual condition touched him, he wept in despair. The Emperor kept him informed of the popular criticism of his career: how Catholics thought Avignon should be taken in place of Rome, on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread: how Consalvi was sneered at all over the world for his long opposition to the dictates of common sense: with other comforting specimens of opinion, all showing the need of an alliance between Pope and Emperor.

"Now at last we have it, Holy Father," said Napoleon on this occasion. "A few more papers are to be signed, and then you will be enthroned at Avignon, where the greatest empire of time will be your support."

"More papers," sighed the Pope.

"Ah, what a spectacle that will be," the Emperor

replied with enthusiasm, walking up and down, and gesturing, "what a terrible spectacle to the whole world when the Church, in the person of Pius VII, and the Empire, in the person of the universal Emperor Napoleon, join hands for the conversion of the world."

"Yes, indeed, a terrible spectacle," said Pius with a pleased smile.

"We shall have a missionary department of the government, whose sole work will be the baptism of the heathen everywhere, without delay, wholesale. I mean the savages of course, who take their religion from their king. The other nations, who are religious by conviction, such as the English and Russians, must be converted at leisure."

"I fear it will be a distant day," said the Pope.

"But not so distant, Holy Father. When the universal Empire makes the Catholic the religion of the State, you will have millions of converts just because of that fact. Why are the English all Protestant to-day, altho yesterday they were all Catholics? Because Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Somerset the Protector, and Elisabeth, made heresy the religion of the state."

"A long distant day before the descendants of ancient Catholics return to the faith of their fathers," repeated Pius VII.

"I see you are despondent to-day," replied the Emperor taking a seat near the old man, and beginning to fondle his feeble, transparent hands. "Well, do you know we are going to have some excitement very soon, here in the palace, and you are to be the center of the scene?"

"You are planning something, my son?"

"Nothing less than a marriage, Holy Father. The Marquis Consalvi is about to marry a charming young lady of the court. I hope you will do your old minister the compliment of performing the ceremony."

"With pleasure. I had forgotten the young Marquis. It will be a great pleasure to see him, and to unite him to this charming young woman, who no doubt is worthy of him."

"Intimately connected with the imperial family," said Bonaparte with a grim smile.

"And the Cardinal will be there I presume?"

"I gave him a pressing invitation indeed in person at Rheims. His Eminence may have found some difficulty in packing up, but he is on his way here and may arrive in time to give his brother away. It will be a great pleasure and honor for him to have Your Holiness perform the ceremony."

For a moment Napoleon considered the plan of admitting Consalvi to the scene of his own confusion, just to see the rage, anger and grief of that impassive face, to enjoy its horror at the degradation of the Marquis. He dismissed it. Consalvi's rage had power and method like his own, and might work mischief. Besides Consalvi still figured in his plans as the successor of this delicate, decrepit old man from whose nerveless hands the sceptre had fallen, yet who remained a monarch because millions of believers so regarded him. His throne remained unshaken, and the diplomats of Europe, of all faiths, schemed to hold it up, independent of such forces as his own. He had imprisoned the old man, exiled his advisers, and wrecked his government; whereupon England and Russia and Prussia made the

restoration of Rome to Pius VII a feature of their policies. Who can fathom these mysteries of human government? How easy for God to rule the world amid the clash of interests! Indeed how easy for himself to do the same, if he could but subdue his own passion for empire! He started from his reverie with beaming eye.

"I fear," the Pope was saying, "that Cardinal Consalvi will not approve our plan of ruling from Avignon. He is a stubborn character, and does not easily change."

"You must convince him, Holy Father," replied the Emperor with force. "What have we done, you and I? Simply brought the two great powers of earth into proper relation. You are the successor of St. Peter, the custodian of the keys, the keeper of the world's conscience; I am the Emperor, the arbiter of social questions, the guardian of order and peace. I rule from Paris and you from Avignon. Later we may make it Moscow and Rome, and later still Jerusalem and Antioch. It is a matter of convenience. Where we are, there shall the power be. Consalvi is too much of a diplomat to believe in dreams of this kind. He is always measuring and weighing the power of Pitt, the machinations of Metternich, the strength of my France. But diplomats, like critics, are the creatures of that thing in which they work. It is the daring, original author who breeds the critic. It is the ruler who breeds the diplomat, and the diplomat thinks, because he can measure what has been done, that he can see also what should come forth, and even limit the output. But you will tell him, Holy Father, that the die is cast, and that Dante's dream is about to come

true. Absolute pope and absolute emperor will rule the world for its highest freedom and happiness."

It was impossible even for enemies to resist the charm of Napoleon when he spoke in this fashion. Talleyrand and Fouché and their kind alone could sneer, because sneering was their business. The rest of mankind cheered these grand sentiments which belonged to the golden age, applauded these rosy dreams which nature had given to Napoleon in order to destroy him at the right moment. The Pope clapped his delicate, white hands, as if applauding an actor, and Napoleon blushed at the compliment and the implication.

"Ah, you think I am Talma," he said.

"No, I think you are Charlemagne, my son, and I rejoice that my hands anointed you. Oh, God grant that your plans work out for the salvation of society and the happiness of mankind."

Pius rose from his seat and kissed the pale cheek of this strange and terrible man, who in this glowing moment looked to his fervid imagination like the great ruler of the past.

"They will, they will," repeated Napoleon fervently, "but you must impress your sentiments on Consalvi, on Pacca, on all the other obstinates. Oh, you may even promise them Rome, which is only a stopping-place on the road of glory. Indeed I see the day when the sole ruler of this little planet will be the Pope-Emperor."

"Nothing is impossible to you," said the Pope tapping his cheek in reproof, "and you are one of the forces that make dreams come true."

He accompanied the Emperor as far as the door in high good humor.

"Take care of your health," was the parting injunction of Napoleon. "Keep out in the open, increase your strength, for great times are coming."

The utterance of his own dreams intoxicated the Emperor and filled him for a moment with the certainty that they would come true, but as soon as he stopped talking the shadows of doubt came back to depress him. He was still exalted when he met Marquis Consalvi in the ante-room of his own quarters. Such delight and love shone in the lad's eyes that the Emperor took his arm and walked up and down the apartment with him for some time.

"The Pope is a charming man, a real father of the faithful. I have just been with him. He enters into all my schemes, and he is going to persuade your stubborn brother to accept our view of things. So that by the time you meet, the Cardinal will admit that the innocence of the children is often ahead of the wisdom of the old men. He is still in the shadow, while you bask in the sun. Not a word. Tell me: how do you find Madame Elisabeth?"

"Quite at her ease, but uncertain of the future," replied Andrea, blushing. "I have assured her of the good intentions in her behalf, but so far I have not hinted at the form."

"Except by those glances, sighs, words, behaviors which betray a man to a woman, long before he speaks his mind. And how is that succeeding?"

"It is hard to tell, Sire. Madame Elisabeth has a prepossession which shuts out the view of most men until

they become very emphatic. Perhaps I have been diplomatic, too slow, in order to be sure."

"Diplomacy is indeed slow," said the Emperor laughing, "but I think you have shown intelligence. This woman is like your brother, obstinate. She is not to be bribed, nor coaxed, nor worried, nor taken by storm. The sunshine of court, of imperial favor, of future glory, of immediate love, falling on her like sun and rain on the stubborn plant may banish prepossessions and give her normal development. But assure me that she pleases you."

"Sire, she is a wonderful creature, and would please the most fastidious, and win the most obstinate."

"Because, you shall not marry only where your heart is. I shall never cast a shadow on your life, Marquis, if I can help it, for it would be a crime against love, against a devotion which I prize. Government is a hard task, and I am often forced for the sake of policy to do the thing which I detest. But in your case there must be an exception. If therefore your heart turns elsewhere, speak."

"Ah, what honor to hear Your Majesty speak like that. You have only to say the word and I die for you, Sire, as so many better men have done. But I am satisfied with your Majesty's choice, and if the lady will accept me I am at her service for life."

The Emperor pressed the lad's hand and embraced him.

"Thank God, I am surrounded by such affection and devotion as yours," he said, "for I shall need it all this year."

Dismissing the Marquis he went on to the apartments

of the Empress, for whom he had a task suited to her fussy but useful powers of diplomacy. The thought of this golden-haired, blue-eyed Austrian princess, who had replaced Josephine and had come to him as the sign of his tremendous victory over Europe, no longer gave him unmixed pleasure. It was a popular saying, already expressed by the shrewd Betty, that Marie Louise would prove another Marie Antoinette to the reigning monarch of France. Napoleon was superstitious enough to feel such sayings, and a little shadow fell on his brow as he entered his wife's presence. But the laughing face of the young creature, who saw nothing but the glory of Napoleon and the eternal power of her Austrian home, banished his frown.

"You are always smiling," he said, embracing her, "and it makes me jealous, for I know not whether it is with the joy of being my wife, or the mother of my son."

"It must be both, Sire, but I myself do not know which joy gives me the greater pleasure. I have no doubt, however, that you love your son more than you do your wife, because it would give you more grief to lose him than to lose me."

"So you are jealous too, Madame," said he slyly. "And I may repeat your words, that the death of your son would be to you a greater calamity than the death of your husband; for in the latter case you would still have all that I have been able to give you, and also your son. On the other hand I can better afford to lose my heir than to lose you, for in that event I would still have France, Austria and you. Now why do you tease your innocent mind with such speculations?"

"One must think occasionally, Sire."

"I forbid it. For the present the Empress of France can afford to dispense with self-torture. But now I have a little task for you. It is time to spread the net for this American girl, the lady whom Jerome the insufferable raised up to make trouble."

"I am just dying to meet her, Sire. They say she is the most original creature, and says the most horrid things at the right moment. Am I to spread the net? And how? and where?"

"At your convenience, Madame. She has been attempting mischief secretly here for years, and I wish to put an end to it gracefully. I am going to marry her to young Consalvi. The Pope will grant her a divorce presently, and if I marry her to a courtier I will have her always under my thumb. You are to persuade her that imperial honors are in store for her if she does as I order."

"There will not be much difficulty in that task?"

"Ah, how lightly you say that, after all my warnings to despise no antagonist," he said, shaking his finger at her. "This is no court maid, mind you, looking for advancement. She is a savage from the wilderness, to whom kings and queens are simply curiosities. She will admire your jewels more than your Hapsburg name and your imperial rank. Dismiss the idea that you are to have an easy task with the lady from Baltimore."

"You amaze me! Such praise from you, Sire!" said the Empress with a pout. "Is she then a philosopher, an ascetic, a saint?"

"I do not know," he replied meditatively. "The

children of the wilderness are an odd product. I saw them in Africa. I have not had time to study the Americans, to whom I gave an empire, both to keep them occupied and to punish Britain. It may overwhelm them and again it may overwhelm the English. I shall not be here to see the result. Well, do your best with Madame Patterson. Amuse yourself with her, but do not despise her, and bring her to a happy state of mind, if you can."

"If I can!" cried the Empress, pouting again.

He went away smiling at the confidence of royal blood in its powers, the confidence which destroyed Marie Antoinette, had made Europe his vassal, would now provide the clever woman from Baltimore with entertainment, and expose the Empress to disappointment, by which she was to learn the ways of greatness. He began to laugh to himself at the sideshows of the world, never dreaming that another year would see his battered tent of empire flapping in the field of the sideshows.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HUMORS OF DIPLOMACY.

ALL at once Betty filled to the brim with happiness, warning herself at the same moment that such a state always leads to folly. She must keep her wits about her. Her happiness sprang from the fact that Napoleon had designs in her regard. She was no longer merely a prisoner, but a person of consequence. Moreover, knowing the game about to be played, she could enjoy delay, prepare her forces, study her plans. Her wit taught her that to Napoleon she was of no more consequence than a pin; that he employed her merely to help a greater plot along; that this plot probably concerned Cardinal Consalvi, since the Marquis was one of the pawns in the game; and that the Emperor hoped, in marrying her to the Marquis, to settle the divorce question forever. Consalvi would like to have his brother's marriage valid, and might consent to a decree of nullity for her and Jerome. Not a bad scheme! She felt drawn into it by her own inclination. The long delay in the struggle for recognition had wearied her spirit. In nine years she had seen Jerome closely but once, and his tender remark to call on him directly meant nothing after all, for she had never been able to get near enough to him to ask his aid. Was it not a hopeless affair by this time? And since she loved the

court, and could not go back to America, what happier solution of difficulties, what sweeter road to glory, than this golden path made by an Emperor? Andrea Consalvi had not his superior in Europe. Handsome, fiery, patient, noble, clean-hearted and young, in his present joy he sparkled like wine in the sunlight. She could not help but love him, and the great king-maker had hinted broadly that one day the Marquis might be the king. Betty gave herself up to the dream, and swayed to the temptation when alone, as one in sleep yields to the weakness resisted by day; but in her waking hours, much to her own irritation, she laughed at the Marquis and ridiculed the plans of the Emperor. She liked teasing. Even had she made up her mind to surrender, the desire to make Emperor and Marquis earn the prize would have forced her to defend the citidel to the last. But happiness clothed her days, and she waited for the various incidents which must lead up to the last event, the climax. Fouché opened the merry attack on her resolution. He came to pay his respects, and to shape her destiny. She feared this clever and terrible man, who impaled his victims with their own weapons, and trapped them with their own nets. He came by the order of the Emperor to persuade her to his imperial will. Under her breath she swore that Fouché would not wring from her a single concession, no matter what the final conclusion might be.

"I denied myself the pleasure of meeting you at Rheims, Madame, in order to add nothing to your confusion," he said. "I knew that later I should help to entertain you here under agreeable conditions."

"Your Excellency has always been most considerate,"

she replied with moistened eyes. "Your kindness gave me the one joy of the last ten years."

"A bitter joy I fear. I admired your ability to get wherever you wished. Also your facility in disappearing. But angels have wings even in our day."

"Thank you, Excellency. The other party had the wings, and some day I may tell you how it was done."

"No need. I know King Jerome and the various members of the imperial family. Let us forget the past in the light of the future."

Something like a grin showed on the impassive face of the Duke of Otranto.

"The light of the future," repeated Betty with a purely artificial sigh.

"It is surprising how affairs change, Madame, in a short space of time. Yours have changed for the better. You are at Fontainebleau. Presently you will become a member of the court, the intimate of the Empress. A little later, if you have the proper spirit, you will be launched on a career whose glory words cannot fitly describe. I see you have guessed it all, as a clever woman should."

"How can you see so much, Excellency, in so little?"

"Your charming face, Madame. But I have also heard from various sources of the pleasant ride from Rheims to Paris under the escort of the fascinating Colonel Consalvi."

Betty laughed in spite of herself and blushed.

"Ah, it is not gold, or mere words, or honors alone, that win the heart of a woman, but a thousand other little things: looks, sighs, grimaces; a little strut on foot, a gallant poise on horseback; flowers suddenly

picked at the roadside and flung into her lap. I have a long list of the behaviors of the Marquis on the journey from Rheims. And of course you liked it."

"What woman does not?" she answered. "And from a man like the Marquis, who is much younger than I am, and therefore freer in his behavior with me than with the woman he would love."

"Nevertheless he is yours, and the question which will shortly concern us all here at Fontainebleau is: will you have him? I may add: with the blessing of the Emperor?"

"I do not think the Marquis Consalvi would wear the old shoes of King Jerome."

"You are too severe on yourself. Yet I happen to know that the Marquis will not hesitate to accept the pearl which the savage rejected. In this case I do not refer to your recent husband, because he could not well help himself. I speak in general terms. Has not the Marquis made it plain to you that he will not reject the pearl flung at him by the dispenser of most things in France, our mighty Emperor?"

"But he has become a courtier, the simple Marquis, and I may be excused for misinterpreting the signs rather prettily displayed the last few weeks," she replied with good humor.

"The signs all read one way, and if I may be permitted to offer you advice, on the strength of my good will towards you—"

"You are only too kind," said she with a sign for him to continue.

"Accept the situation and make the most of it. I give you this advice apart from my character as the

Emperor's agent," he added earnestly. "You will never make anything out of King Jerome, whose character changes with the circumstances, and whose luck is entirely undeserved. As the wife of the Marquis Consalvi only a convulsion of the universe could change your rank and unsettle your happiness."

"Thank you most sincerely, Excellency, for this advice, whose depths I feel rather than see," she said gratefully. "But I have made up my mind to hold to the one position. I stick to my old love for love's sake, even though he is faithless. I remain his wife till God frees him from the bond."

"You make me believe in love, Madame. Yet I perceive that you have not heard of the new decision."

"There has been no new decision," she replied quickly, feeling that Fouché would deliver his blow at this point.

"The result of the alliance between Pope and Emperor, pardon me for mentioning it so plainly, includes a decree of nullity for your union with King Jerome, and for Josephine's with Napoleon. Neither you nor she ever had any right to the Bonaparte name. Both marriages are declared null and void."

"Is not this another imperial trick?" she gasped.

"The Marquis would not court you and could not marry you, if you were not free. He knows that you are a free woman."

"True, true, true," she kept repeating, as the ground slipped away from her feet. "Oh, I might have known it! There is nothing too base for a Bonaparte, and the devil is on his side."

"You are agitated and no wonder. Still, you can

see that prudence urges you to accept the Bonaparte protection. You are a shrewd as well as a brave woman, and your opportunity is at hand: a kingdom for your son and another for your husband. You will not throw away these glories for the sake of a stick like Jerome."

By this time Betty had recovered her breath and her courage, and could fence with her opponent, whose sincerity she doubted.

"For the name of wife I would throw away forty kingdoms," said she.

"I respect the sentiment, but not the sense of your speech," he replied.

"You respect the sense no less than the sentiment, under the circumstances," she answered with a demure smile. "The Bonapartes will give and take no more kingdoms, Excellency. They will do well if they can hold what they have."

"Am I listening to treason?" said the Duke playfully, holding up his hands in mock horror. "Of course it is not treason in you, as you are not a subject of the Emperor. But these are dangerous sentiments at any time. You used the phrase: under the circumstances. A happy phrase! Why not apply it to yourself and act accordingly?"

"I shall, and I suppose a little meditation will show me the fitness of doing what the Emperor wishes. I have lost my case if the Pope has tied himself to Napoleon," she said listlessly.

"But the Pope has a knack of getting on his feet, dear Madame, which makes him a remarkable sovereign. In marrying a Consalvi you ally your cause with that of the Holy See. Fortune seems kind to you.

The terrible Fouché makes a pet of you, when he should put you in jail and forget you. The more terrible Napoleon gives you back with his left what he takes with his right hand. You shall one day be queen as you dreamed, but in what a different fashion from your dream. Now I shall go away, for you are grieved and ill. But you have the steel of the diplomat, and you must fight these unbecoming tremors."

"I shall never be a diplomat," she answered weakly, as he kissed her hand.

"And why not?" he asked curiously.

"I cannot stomach lying, Your Excellency."

"Oh, fie, fie!" he answered, and went off laughing.

He thought that he had won and so reported to the Emperor, with a recommendation that the Empress should take Betty in hand and soothe her wounded feelings. Poor Betty! Until the last moment she kept up a hard front to the Duke of Otranto, but her heart had turned to water at the news of the Pope's decree of nullity for the Baltimore marriage. She was no longer a wife. The various governments had accepted the decree of the French courts nullifying her marriage, but while the Vatican refused its assent to nullity she had behind her the power of Rome as well as the sympathy of the people. Now she was no longer a wife, and something mean besides: a deserted, deceived, despised creature, forbidden to enter France; a ridiculous, ambitious American, who had failed in her scheme to become a member of a royal family.

"Oh, you wretch!" she cried at her forlorn figure in the glass, "you have failed like a gipsy. Hasten to become the Marquise Consalvi, to make certain of a

place in this rotten court, before they cast you into the sewer. Thank God that one so noble as Andrea loves you a little . . . that you are worth the consideration of an Emperor . . . have a place in his plans . . . for you have failed miserably."

Even while she bemoaned her failure and belittled herself the thought of surrendering the long fight, of accepting Josephine's position, roused her obstinacy. It was pure folly of course, for with the withdrawal of the Pope her case fell to the ground. When the Empress commanded her to appear at a little function in the imperial apartments pride and obstinacy filled her to the brim, and fought with the natural delight of the moment. However, Betty was used to contending feelings and enjoyed them all. She had all a woman's curiosity to see an archduchess at close range, a Hapsburg princess, the real thing, secure in these honors, if a tottering empress. As an American she lacked the innate respect of Europeans for royal blood, seeing in a prince his human nature first and his royalty later, or not at all. She was really a child of the American wilderness. Marie Louise had a like curiosity to see such a child, and kept her waiting at the far end of the room, while each surveyed the other. Betty was dark, sparkling, vivacious even in repose; Marie Louise was a child of the sun, yellow hair, blue eyes, white complexion, youthful but heavy, of slow mind and wit. She thought of Indians at sight of Betty, and Betty thought of dolls, dainty, wooden, stupid dolls. Why should such creatures wear the purple. When Betty was presented the Empress made her sit beside her

on a sofa of golden frame and blue velvet background, which set off the two ladies perfectly.

"I am glad to see that you are happy, Madame Elisabeth," said the Empress, "and to compliment you on your appearance. You seem born for a court."

"Thanks, Your Majesty," said Betty with the proper humility of tone, "but my happiness is due entirely to Your Majesty's kindness, not to the court. I can be happy in a court, too—if I have my own way."

"Oh, you comical creature," said the Empress, bursting into a laugh, "do you not know that not even the Emperor has his own way at court? How could you then expect to have yours?"

"One must be inventive and find the way. I could live forever among the delights of Fontainebleau."

"You have only to say the word, Madame Elisabeth."

Betty gave a sigh and languished.

"Can you not see that nature and fate together have chosen you for great things? Why do you hesitate?"

"I have no right to hesitate," said Betty, feeling her obstinacy and pride rising. "We have a saying in our country: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. I have one king in my hand: why hasten to lose him for the king in the bush?"

"Oh, dear heaven!" cried the Empress, holding her hand to her side, "I must tell Napoleon that. King Jérôme the bird in the hand, Marquis Consalvi the bird in the bush! But remember, Madame Elisabeth, that you have not the bird in the hand nor the bird in the bush. And your child, your darling boy, will you refuse him a brilliant future?"

"Is it so very brilliant after all? What the child

has never had he will never miss. I am not thinking of him at all. In our country there exists a strong prejudice against a woman with two or more husbands."

"Which would be a case of a bird in the hand and a bird in the bush?" retorted the Empress.

"She is nearly as bright as she looks," Betty thought, and her eyes did not conceal the thought from the young woman.

"You have no princesses in America, Madame Elisabeth?"

"Only among the Indians," said Betty softly, and the Empress screamed, against all the rules of court etiquette.

"So that in the event of your union with the Marquis Consalvi, you would later become eligible to the American court?" she said.

"Precisely. And the etiquette of the American court is more elaborate and painful than in Europe. One of the chief ceremonies is the smoking of a great pipe, which passes from mouth to mouth among the courtiers. I might introduce it at my court of the future."

"I have no doubt but what you will, and I shall do my utmost to make that court a reality. Let us talk over all the details in the right way."

Betty stopped her with an imploring look.

"Do not be too kind, Your Majesty, for I have not decided what to do, and it hurts me to flout your favors. Give me a little while to quiet this pain, and then I may have some graciousness in me; but just now I am ready to do the wild things which only we children of the woods can do. I am not a courtier, and perhaps I never shall be."

“Indeed you are not,” said the Empress, “and you shall not be worried by our civilized tortures. Let us forget the present business, and do you give us an account, with illustrations, of court life among the Indians.”

This suggestion received the applause of the ladies, and in a few minutes the vivacious Betty had them convulsed with a recital of court customs and imitations of the same among the Maryland aborigines.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BETTY ENTERTAINS THE EMPEROR.

BOTH the Empress and the Duke of Otranto agreed in their report to Napoleon on Madame Elisabeth's disposition: that she seemed won by the proposed honors but declined to commit herself, and consequently needed a stronger force than persuasion. The Emperor had a leisure hour and some interest in the American girl, who thus defied him without losing the regard of an empress and a cabinet minister, and was probably angling for an interview with himself; he was pleased at the failure of Marie Louise to get a straight answer from Betty; so he sent for the lady from Baltimore, as he called her, much as the cat would send for the mouse reserved for a future meal. The master of empire found relief from weariness of spirit and doubt of the future in playing with a resolute victim. Evidently this strange woman, fanatical in her devotion to Jerome, a poor stick, had some standard of life which defied temptation. Betty came into the imperial presence with delight, and made her prettiest curtsy. She admired Napoleon as a great success, and the tired monarch saw in her dark eyes the same admiration which made the Marquis Consalvi so interesting; only Betty's feeling stopped at admiration. As she bowed low he thought of poor Josephine; kindred misfortune had bred in the two women a lofty fidelity.

"The lady from Baltimore," he said, offering his hand and seating her at the other end of the couch where he reclined, pleased that Betty just devoured him with her bright eyes. "Ah, what women they mould in America! How long have you defied France, Fouché and me, Madame? Since 1807, fully six years. How did you do it? Through that hussy the Countess Franchi, I warrant."

"Surely Your Majesty does not think that such an enterprise could be managed by a mere maid-of-honor?" replied Betty in her direct and demure fashion. Napoleon fairly cackled.

"A mere maid-of-honor!" he exclaimed. "Of course not. Most likely you had Consalvi too, and since you are an American the Prince of Benevento might have helped you. They shall all be punished, I assure you."

"Not at all, Sire," answered Betty smoothly but with great respect, "my protector is too high to be punished."

"Whom do you mean then?" he snapped, feeling that the woman had the better of him in the opening of the game.

"Her Majesty, the Empress Josephine."

"Very nice of her," and he made a gesture of impatience.

"He feels the awkwardness of having two wives," Betty said to herself, "and yet he wishes to make me the wife of two husbands."

"The last time we met, Fouché told me about it afterwards, was in the house of Cardinal Consalvi, was it not?"

"It was quite unintentional on my part—"

"Of course, of course. I remember you said something in the conversation that pleased me. It was quite American, that is, of the wilderness. Just what I cannot recall."

"I remember every incident of the meeting and every word, Sire. What pleased you also seemed to displease you for you bade me good-night at once. I said that Americans admired you because you had taught kings their origin, and showed them that the power which made them can unmake them."

"Precisely. That's very American. Well, after your many adventures, you have almost succeeded in becoming a member of the imperial family, tho not as the wife of Jerome. You are here at Fontainebleau, a guest of the Empress."

"I thank Your Majesty for this kindness."

"And I suppose you have now seen the hopelessness of your quest, and are prepared to give up the struggle for the impossible?"

"No, Sire, I have not given up and I am not entirely hopeless."

"I know Americans are stubborn," he said smiling, "but they are also shrewd and sensible. Did you not have with Jerome, on the same evening, in the house of the Cardinal, an interview which convinced you of some things?"

"Ah, Sire, the Duke of Otranto procured for me that interview with Jerome in order to crush me, to reduce my hopes to dust, so that when I left France it would be forever. The Duke heard every word we uttered—"

"And reported to me the admirable utterances of Jerome, which were strong enough to have crushed

most women, and which at the time seemed to crush you. But they did not, and they did not convince you."

Betty could not help laughing, and before she could reply Napoleon said,

"I see what happened. Jerome could not resist your tears and your despair. He said one thing for the ears of Fouché and another thing for your suffering heart. Poor Jerome! plenty of heart but no head."

"And no courage," said Betty, "if I may venture to criticize the King."

"You may in my presence, as a member of the imperial family."

"I would have died that night had he not spoken to me his last word, which held a promise to meet me again and to help me. He never kept it. We have never met since. But the consolation of his words remains."

"Since it saved your life I do not blame him for his indiscretion," said the Emperor, with a smile so sweet and a voice so tender, that Betty's strong heart melted within her. She looked at him cautiously, and saw the ivory face glowing with feeling, and the wonderful eyes moist with sympathy.

"Your fidelity deserves some return," he went on, and at once Betty felt that he was thinking of Josephine; but she also recognized with alarm that she had lost ground in her contest with this great personage, that he had seized an outpost and was threatening her main position. Her heart and her face hardened like steel against him.

"Fidelity is a great virtue, my child, and no one knows better its beauty than he who rules; and none

knows better its rarity. Ah, it is rarer than emeralds in a court. He who needs it most seems to have it least, and often to deserve it least. I do not admire your former lover, Madame. I cannot understand how a man of that character can hold a heart as faithful as yours. He is not worth it, for Jerome has been faithful to no one, not even himself. He does not know how. His flippancy and conceit destroy even the virtues which nature conferred on him. Ah, what a mystery, that a woman should be faithful to such a creature until her fidelity inspires mankind."

Betty remained silent with astonishment and distrust. She did not know that the great man had dropped diplomacy for the moment, and was showing her his heart and his experience. He had many true friends, but his own family had by its folly and meanness betrayed and destroyed him. He knew Jerome in his proper character, and it seemed ridiculous that the jewel of this woman's high fidelity should be flung at his feet.

"I can say," she ventured, "that it is not only because of him, this fidelity which you praise, Sire. I am his wife. He is the father of my child. I would not surrender my right nor my child's right for the whole world. King Jerome might have been a sot, and I would have maintained those rights just the same. Perhaps I would not have been so insistent," she admitted, blushing like a girl, "had he not been brother to the Emperor."

"You are frank, my child, and it is good to recognize one's own weaknesses. But now that you have seen

what has happened, you will put aside this dream, and accept the happiness offered to you?"

"There is no happiness for me while Jerome lives, Sire."

"What! after all that you have heard! You know that at last the Pope grants Jerome a divorce and declares your marriage null?"

"I do, Sire. But God is above the Pope and I trust in Him."

"Is not this pettishness, child? The whole world now admits that the ceremony performed in Baltimore was null from the beginning. While the papal court held the ceremony a valid marriage, you had some basis for action. Now you have none, and you are too experienced, too shrewd, to carry on a struggle over a shadow."

"Shadows indeed," she murmured, getting weak as the hopelessness of further struggle presented itself in the Emperor's words. "I have often to feel myself, to look at the walls and gardens and inhabitants of the palace, to shake off the feeling that my life is a shadow. Since the Duke of Otranto told me of the Pope's action I have lost myself."

The Emperor smiled, recognizing the feeling, which had often troubled him after the return from terrible Russia.

"Ah, but you must not yield to that," he said briskly. "You have been faithful to one idea too long. It is only Jerome, who flies from your fidelity, because it is too great for one so small as he. To pursue that will-o'-the-wisp longer would destroy your mind. No, you must now be advised, I was going to say by me, but I now say by yourself. Nature in these odd moods is

warning you. You are a woman in a thousand. You must be faithful, for thus God has shaped you. Well, you shall be faithful to me, to the dynasty of Bonaparte, to the family which caused you the suffering of your life, but will yet crown you with its glory. Have I not planned worthy of an emperor? You will be related to the two powers of earth, the Emperor and the Pope, and you will be important in their schemes of government. Your son shall be a king, if necessary, and your children shall be princes. I say all this seriously, knowing that the fulfilment depends on the future, that is, on God. Is not the Marquis Consalvi a gift from heaven?"

"Really and truly, Sire. He loves you too much, more than the dear brother who made him what he is. And still it is a poor return for the love and devotion which he offers to you, Sire, that he should have thrust on him a woman five years older than himself."

"Yet worthy of him were he twice as perfect," said Napoleon gaily. "But mark you I have commanded him, as he loves me, to take only the woman whom he loves or can love. He is free to refuse you. And you too shall be free to reject him and to choose another. But where on earth will you get such a young god as Andrea Consalvi? Why do you hesitate?"

And still she distrusted this eloquent, loquacious, tender-hearted Emperor who addressed her as freely as a sister. He embarrassed her, for this was not the Napoleon whom she had looked to encounter.

"I hesitate because the other dream is still strong in me," she replied. "I would rather be the wife of Jerome than the Empress of France. I would rather

die faithful to my dream than to die a queen unfaithful."

"You have been faithful to the last, but do not be stubborn," he said gently. "Let us suppose that you are the most faithful Catholic on the earth, and that you have been married to a non-Catholic husband. A dispute rises concerning the validity of the marriage. The courts decide that there has never been a true marriage in this union. The whole world accepts the decision, except the Pope, who maintains his right against all courts to decide such a question for Catholics. He decides finally that the marriage was null from the beginning. Even the Pope cannot divorce Catholics whose marriage is valid. He can only investigate a particular union and decide as to its validity. He decides against you. Are you not then absolutely free? Is not the marriage, which secular and papal courts declare null, a thing which never existed? Answer me plainly, my child?"

"It never existed, it was just a dream, and all these forlorn years I have pursued a dream," she replied with quivering mouth. "Yet somehow I cannot release myself from the slavery of that dream. It holds me in spite of such reasoning. I am still the wife of Jerome. No court can break the bond. Ah, if I never felt it before I feel it now; that what God has joined together man cannot put asunder. If all men for all time agreed that our marriage was null, if I accepted their decree as the truth and married another, I could not shake off the intimate certainty that Jerome and I are husband and wife. I know another unfortunate,

unhappy woman who thinks the same," she added slyly, but Napoleon ignored the hint at Josephine.

"It is strange how ideas take possession of us, how they enslave us," he said thoughtfully. "We think it is ourselves who are acting, planning, laboring, when it is really the idea. If we lose it we wonder why we worked so hard, and our past anguish looks silly."

He rose suddenly and began to pace the room with his hands behind his back frowning. Betty forgot her woes, her present danger, in watching him, and her heart beat at the thought of her intimacy with this hero of the ages, a little, pale, impatient man who had in a decade overthrown all the generals of Europe, puzzled all the diplomats, reorganized France, suppressed the Revolution, lifted up her native land, and shaped anew the destiny of men. How did she dare to oppose his kindness with her obstinacy? Even as she said the word he stopped and said,

"Ah, Madame, after all you are not as faithful as you are obstinate. Fidelity to Jerome is now as misplaced as fidelity to the Sultan, yet you are faithful still. You are more Catholic than the Pope, you a Protestant. In woman obstinacy may become a disease, an insanity. See how kindly I have chatted with you, and you merely grow more stubborn. You appeal from mankind to God. That's an ancient trick with the obstinate. So I must command you. As a member of the court, and mother of a child who will become a noble of France, I command you to receive the addresses of the Marquis Consalvi, or to accept and suffer the consequences."

"And what may be the consequences, Sire?"

"The least serious will be your marriage to some other gentleman of rank. You must marry at once. If you decline, then you must go to prison. After that anything can happen to you, for here we still have the carelessness of the Terror."

She opened her lips to speak but words refused to come.

"Pardon my harshness," he went on briskly, "but bear in mind that I am now dealing with obstinacy. It is no longer a question of justice. Out of the prison to which your obstinacy consigns you, it is unlikely that you will ever come. Your body will lie in a grave which no one will ever recognize. Your friends will be placated with documents which no one can gainsay, and facts which are either well known, like your violation of the law, or which cannot be disproved. Now do not let obstinacy, which I see rising in your eyes, shut off your view of alternatives: Andrea Consalvi and glory, or prison and the grave."

"I accept Consalvi," she replied with directness, "that is, if the prison is the alternative."

"You have my word for it, Madame."

"Then I accept him, with one condition."

Napoléon looked at her from under his brows with a quizzical smile.

"I feel certain the condition is peculiarly American," he said.

"The condition is that the papal decree of nullity is a fact," she answered with a laugh for his remark. The Emperor seemed to receive an electric shock, and stood a moment with parted lips staring at her in wonder. He knew that the decree did not exist outside

his own mind. He felt certain of getting it from Pius VII, so certain that it looked to him like an accomplished fact. This strange woman felt, but did not know, that the decree did not exist. Was her prescient feeling an omen that the ties between her and Jerome were never to be severed? He was angered, but the thought of Josephine repressed his anger. This American was another Josephine in her affection, fidelity, and courage. He could not be harsh with one who had suffered so much through him, and he admired the instinct which saw farther than reason or spies and warned her that even Emperors can lie.

"The Marquis would not marry you without the decree," said he shortly.

"That was true a month ago, Sire. To-day the Marquis will do anything you command, this side of death. I think you possess his soul."

"Like the other emperor," he replied, pointing to the ground. "Well, I accept your condition, which is shrewdness itself, quite American, and admirable. In this marriage you must make no mistake. Adieu, my dear child. You have given me a pleasant half hour, and I thank you."

The lady from Baltimore curtsied humbly and backed out of the salon.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FLIES IN THE GOLDEN WEB.

INTOXICATION overcame the native shrewdness of Betty after her interview with the Emperor, and the charm of the episode remained long after the intoxication had passed. It was wonderful, this power of a little man with a pallid face and burning eyes, which haunted her for many a long day afterward. The sweetness of his voice echoed in her ears, causing pleasure that felt like pain. She thought it over in her serious way, trying to find its elements, in order to understand and explain it somehow. The great soldier, the great ruler, the modern Alexander, Caesar and Hannibal, did not wholly explain Napoleon's power over others; she felt that part of it lay in her own conceit, her pride in dealing with him on equal terms. His brutality in war stained his military achievements and his tyranny in government disgusted her; he was not impressive physically, and his egotism was merely novel in its immensity and expression; and in that day no one had heard of hypnotism; so Betty charged up the charm of her enemy to his great achievements and her own vanity. Before his charm and his bribes her standards crumbled. He had beaten her on all points but one, and even that barrier had fallen with the supposed failure of the Pope to maintain his origi-

nal position. The golden web had caught her firmly, and she did not regret it. It was hung with diamonds and shot through with glory. Better to be a fly in such a trap than a starved eagle in the Alleghanies! She said this aloud with a flirt of her fan towards her ideals, which stood afar off like timorous ghosts, hoping to be called back. She had fed long enough on the husks of idealism. Experience intruded on her dreams, reminding her that no power on earth can fool a human being half as easily as he can fool himself; that our own arguments against our own conscience, reason, instinct and faith, have more power than a court of theologians. Be it so! she was done with argument and struggle, for her pleasure had begun.

When the Marquis came again and looked at her, both knew that the hour of fate had arrived for them and were happy. This fly in the imperial web had no mental balance left, no scruples, no doubts, no qualms. Everything appeared to him just right, solid as the pyramids, and as explicable as water. He never argued with himself, and was quite sure of every point, because the Emperor supported it. Having decided long ago that his brother, the Cardinal, had erred in his policy, and diplomats often make the most egregious blunders, he found no difficulty in a position so crowded with honors. His influence with Napoleon would smooth the road for the Cardinal, and repay his brother for his love and care. The two flies were therefore in harmony on the main facts of their position, and looked into each other's eyes with delight in that future which belonged entirely to them as partners. There was nothing more to do but go through the forms,

he to offer his hand and she to accept it; forms with which they were already acquainted by experience, and yet suffered a delightful nervousness in repeating. She blushed under his ardent gaze, and he thrilled at the touch of her cool hand so soon to belong to him. So deeply were they under the spell of Napoleon's enchantment that not even the names or phantasms of Jerome and Corona arose to disturb them.

"Well, what did you think of our Emperor after your chat?" said the Marquis. "I see the answer in your eyes, and you may talk freely for I shall not remind you of all the bitter things you said against him."

"I do not take one of them back, Marquis. He deserves them all and more. Yet just the same he is a wonderful man, most charming."

"You see, he casts a spell on everyone, from which they do not escape."

"So do snakes, they say."

"I see you are in a contrary mood this morning. Let us move into the open air, and I shall tell you of the coming campaign where my spurs are to be won."

"And a few holes made in your skin, I fear."

"Ah, you will weep when you hear of my wounds, and dry your tears when you hear of my glory."

They found a green, shaded spot in the vicinity of a fountain, and sat down behind a veil of delicate Spring foliage. Ah, what odors breathed around them, and what sunshine flooded their souls! The world was young again, free from sorrow and care and danger, and they were its sovereigns. Her little hand lay in his, and he stroked it fondly as he spoke.

"Of course the Emperor is thoroughly imperial, and you felt his iron hand in your interview," said he. "But come now, confess: were you not carried away by him? did not his very threats interest you?"

"They were pointed enough, and I confess that I have not been myself since he honored me with his opinions, views, promises, threats and what not. But he also praised me, complimented me, and overpowered me with a sense of greatness which I have never felt before. And he made me understand that your destiny and mine must run together near his throne, if I am to stay there at all. From which I conclude—"

"That I place at your feet all my little, miserable self," Andrea said promptly, somewhat taken aback at the directness of the lady. "I know that I am not worthy of you. I would not have dared to speak to you so soon, but for the command of the Emperor, and the fact that we must be on the march to the front before long. But you know me by this time, do you not? and what I know of you is so sublime, that I feel ashamed to offer myself alone. So let me add the glory and honor and wealth with which an Emperor will endow us both because of our devotion to him."

"Thank you, Marquis. You offer me all that a true woman can desire in offering yourself. Imperial graces set it off as the setting does a diamond. But you know, must know, that the Emperor made you an alternative with another noble and a prison. I must choose between marriage and jail, between you and another."

"Well, you chose," said the Marquis joyously. "That is the way rulers must deal with stubborn subjects. I am willing to be the alternative if the Em-

peror commands. In this case particularly, because a prison has no terrors for you; neither has the other man. And if you take me it will be because you love me."

Something in her eyes encouraged him to press her hand tenderly.

"It is easy to love you, Andrea," she answered with a little blush which filled him with delight.

"And much easier to love you, Elisabeth."

"Oh, a man will love a woman on sight."

"Such a woman as you of course. Do you blame him?"

"No, it is a sign of perfect taste and a kind disposition."

"But why anyone should love me unless after long acquaintance—"

"That would be true in Rheims, where it would take a long time to get acquainted with you; but in Fontainebleau no flower has shown such color and beauty as you in your court dress and court prospects."

"It is the prospects. There's the secret. Then, priceless jewel of the American wild, deign to cast your eye on me and let me be your setting. What do you say? Will you be the Marquise Consalvi?"

She smiled and sighed with eyes moist and cast down.

"Ah, what an honor! But the shadow lies on it, for you are doing this merely to please the Emperor."

"And would I do nothing to please you?"

"On the contrary, much, but not this offer of your beautiful self, the brother of the great Cardinal, the favorite of the court, the friend and pet of the Emperor, the future marshal and prince."

"Your words serve only to show forth the generosity of my master. Do you believe what he said to me concerning our proposed union? You shall marry only because you love the lady. I commend Madame Elisabeth to your favor, but you must consider yourself free in the matter."

"Then you love me, Andrea?" with a tone which left him uncertain of her seriousness.

"And you love me, Elisabeth?" in the same tone.

"I surely do. Who could help it under the circumstances?"

Everything nowadays amused the Marquis, who had got a new view of life from daily contact with his master. He had learned that one must not take even the most serious matters too seriously. His education had been quite different. In the household of the Cardinal cynicism had no foothold, and all affairs were considered with a dignity proportioned to their nature. He recognized that Betty was playing with him, she who had never taken anything seriously but her marriage and her determination to be Jerome's queen. He would have to take the fortress by assault, and the more he studied its beautiful details the more eager he became to possess it.

"Then if we love each other what is left but to wed speedily?" he said with feigned gravity. "The Emperor wishes it, you are free, and I am willing. Why delay and discuss when we both desire an ending?"

"Because I am not sure that the Emperor means well by me."

"And it follows that he does not mean well by me?"

"Let us be serious for one moment, Andrea."

And he had been serious from the very first day of their new relationship.

"I agree, let us be serious.

"If we are to marry, let us tear down the shadows which hang over us. We have both loved once. We are now both sure that we never loved, or that the old love is dead. What about Corona?"

In spite of himself the blood left his cheek, surged back again, and he fell into a violent agitation, surprising to himself; but the name had been so far from his mind, he had so crushed all sentiment in his heart, that its utterance pierced him deeply in a tender part. Betty made no comment on his emotion until he had recovered by a violent effort.

"How do I know that my heart may not be as tender to Jerome as ever it was?" she said gently. "And that after our marriage I shall find myself grieving as once I used to grieve? The old love has left a wound too tender to be touched roughly."

"Evidently," he replied forcibly. "But I have no doubt that the wound has healed. I thought it had healed perfectly. I was mistaken. But I shall never worry about the lady whose name you mentioned. We know now, you and I, that love is no more eternal than the trees. If the roots have no nourishment it dies. A stroke of lightning kills it. Your tree has lacked nourishment and mine was struck by lightning. That is all."

"You think my love for Jerome is dead?"

"It must be. Anyway it is so exhausted that one stroke would end it, and you fear perhaps to give the stroke. You are like some people I have seen, who

kept the dead in glass a long time, feeling that they were not yet dead and gone while they could look at them."

Betty turned suddenly pale at this vivid figure, whose truth she at once recognized, and burst into silent tears. Even as she had pierced him with the name of Corona he had pierced her heart with this precise description of her own life. Jerome had died, as far as she was concerned, the day of their separation in the port of Lisbon; and she had kept the dead thing enclosed in glass all these years, assuring herself that while she could see him death had not robbed her of her treasure. The Marquis stood up the picture of penitence.

"Do not weep," he said. "The Pope has ended all this suffering for you."

"I can hardly believe it," she replied through her tears, "because popes are steadier than emperors. But it will be easy for you to assure me of the truth through the Cardinal when he arrives here."

"Oh, sooner than that, because His Eminence would not delay in making trouble for us. He opposes the Emperor in everything, and therefore in this which concerns me. No, we must be married and gone by the time His Eminence comes roaring up from Rheims to undo all that the Emperor has done and then be undone himself, unless I can save him."

"You hope to save him!" Betty said with some scorn.

"Oh, the mouse is often permitted to do a trifle for the lion. Are we not by our union paving the way for all sorts of favors for our less lucky friends? And who are we? Just a wild American who should be in jail for opposing an emperor, and a little fool

of a marquis who has dropped into good fortune. Come, Elisabeth, let us end discussion. We shall talk forever, like my brother on the downfall of Napoleon, and finally arrive where we set out. Let us accept our good luck without further debate, get married, and then go into camp beyond the Rhine, where glory dwells."

"Oh, what eloquence! But just a moment. Your brother is no fool, if I may speak so lightly of a truly great man. The air is full of rumors about the coming summer. There is something wrong. I have seen it in the manner of men like Fouché and Talleyrand. Would it not be a horrible joke on us if this year should prove the downfall of Napoleon?"

"It would," he replied with mock seriousness. "I have heard the same rumors since the year 1802, eleven years in fact. The next campaign was always to be the last. The upstart usurper had reached the end of his rope. My brother proved it to me, which was easy, and to himself, which was no joke, until courtiers came with the news of the victory which smashed all prophecy. I will believe the Emperor's end is near when he himself admits it. Come now, an end to discussion. Say that you will be mine. Adieu to Jerome, adieu to Corona! Farewell to Rome, and farewell to America! Henceforth we two consecrate ourselves to ambition, incarnate in the Emperor; where he abides there shall we serve; where he shines we shall shine; where he perishes we shall perish; or as least weep over his grave. We have fed on the husks too long, believing that they were to change into meat and wine. They are still husks, and Napoleon still owns the meat and

wine. Let us join him, the truly great man, who moulds a new universe, in faith and love. Let us be free to serve him whom all Europe now serves."

He held out his arms to her and she placed her hands in his with a little laugh for his lofty appeal.

"You are mine at last," he said, feeling quite sure that the moment had arrived.

"Would you mind, Andrea," uttered most persuasively, "waiting for a decisive answer till to-morrow?"

He burst out laughing, kissed her hands, and began to make his adieu. When he had gone with a quizzical look on his face, she stood depressed and lonely at the result of the interview, and then said a very true, acute thing, as she was in the habit of saying after a crisis:

"With me I fear it will always be 'to-morrow.' Jerome has ruined me."

In a single sentence poor Betty had summed up her character and her history.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CARDINAL AND THE KING.

MONSIGNOR FRANCHI, as a diplomat, believed in letting things alone as long as possible, until they began to show a proper current for individual action; when one might interfere with advantage, direct them to the useful end, and thus save the burnt fingers which too swift interference lavishly provides. Corona grieved deeply but in silence over the coming downfall of Andrea. Her pride kept her from all effort to save Elisabeth and the Marquis from the trap set by the Emperor; and the emphatic advice of her diplomat brother against interference with imperial plans strengthened her pride. Monsignor argued that they had already suffered too much in behalf of the Consalvis; the Cardinal had proved himself hopeless and intractable; the Marquis had evidently deserted his eminent brother; why should they risk what little imperial favor they still possessed for a wild young noble and a pig-headed minister? There was no way out of the present confusion and distress. Upon the heels of this conclusion, which gave Monsignor Franchi great consolation, Cardinal Consalvi arrived in Paris on his way to the Pope at Fontainebleau. When Monsignor Franchi called to pay his respects, the first question was:

"What is Andrea doing? and what are you doing for him?"

"The Marquis is happy," replied Monsignor spreading his hands to indicate how useless to interfere with a happy man. "He is a favorite at court, with Napoleon, Marie Louise, everybody, and he is going to the war as imperial aide-de-camp."

"Is that all?" and the dark eyes of His Eminence searched the depths of the diplomat's mind.

"That is all," said Monsignor softly.

"Why then did Napoleon invite me to his marriage with Madame Patterson? Has that scheme not yet matured?"

"It has not been mentioned publicly or privately, and when I warned Madame Patterson against it she was deeply surprised and highly amused, but fervently declared its possibility."

"And may I ask your opinion, Monsignor? As the brother of Corona you may forget your politics long enough to serve her."

"Poor Corona! she has laid aside her dream of happiness. We have suffered enough in our mistaken efforts to bring about reconciliation between His Majesty and Your Eminence, and have been practicing discretion for some time."

"Do you mean that Corona has given up Andrea?"

"She will tell you so herself, Eminence."

Seeing that Monsignor Franchi declined to be drawn into the family affairs of the Consalvis, the Cardinal dropped further inquiry and requested him to go at once to Fontainebleau and deliver a message to the Marquis and the lady.

"I am satisfied," said he, "that Madame Patterson is being deceived. She has been told, very likely, that the Pope has declared her marriage with Jerome null and void. Otherwise her determination would not be shaken. Andrea has been told the same story, for I cannot conceive of him marrying another man's wife. They may prefer to believe Napoleon rather than me, but at least a doubt will enter their minds, and doubt means delay. Tell them with all the emphasis possible the truth, and that I will support it with my presence a week hence. If they marry then, it will be with their eyes open, and I shall wash my hands of their wretched affairs. Will you do me this service, Monsignor?"

"With pleasure, Eminence," said the prelate briskly, delighted that no harder task had been set him; for now that the Cardinal was to advise the Pope once more, probably as his first minister, life might easily become difficult, even intolerable, from the demands of Consalvi and his supporters. Monsignor fled and the Cardinal smiled. He dealt differently with Corona, who came with a smiling face and congratulations.

"See now the generosity of the Emperor," she said. "The Sacred College assembles once more after its exile—"

"Pardon an interruption. A true partisan would have said 'merited' before 'exile.' Yes, we meet again in the prison, without any gratitude to our liberator, who is also our jailer. But all this is beside the question. Tell me the latest news. What is Andrea doing? What is he planning? Your brother told me only what a newspaper might print."

Corona could not hinder the pain of her heart from

showing itself in her smiling face, and once the smile faded her grief and anxiety became evident. In broken sentences she described the precise position of the poor flies in the imperial web, the secret gossip of the court, the intentions of the Emperor, the brilliant place held by Andrea, the rumors that he would one day be king when his brother became pope after Pius VII. Woman-like Corona lingered on descriptions of his uniforms, his popularity, his gaiety, his unbounded delight, and his pleasure in the society of Madame Patterson. Altho his heart was sad Consalvi found consolation in the vital love of this sweet, courageous, experienced girl for his unfortunate brother.

"What have you done to save him, Corona?"

"You would merely have to see him at court to understand that not even Your Eminence may interfere," she replied. "I could do nothing but warn him and Elisabeth against the Emperor indirectly."

"You love him still, my child?"

"I am tearing it out of my heart," she answered proudly.

"You will not need that sacrifice. The love of a lifetime is not so easily destroyed. Andrea is human. He has been hoodwinked by that monstrous genius Napoleon. After starving with me in obscurity the sudden rise to fame and fortune has proved too much for him, as it would for the strongest. You must pity him, love him, and save him. He is more to be pitied than a lamb in the folds of a serpent. Oh, what I have suffered since his departure! In my dreams I saw him night after night, plunged in stormy seas, drowning, but not calling for help. I could not help

him then. I can do something now, and you must aid me, Corona."

"What can we do? He is enraptured with his new honors. If you saw him with Madame Patterson you would not believe that he had ever asked another woman to be his wife."

"I have sent your brother to him and the lady with the assurance that the Pope still holds to the decision on the Baltimore marriage."

"The Marquis will not believe it. Madame Patterson has begun to doubt her own wisdom. It has been made clear to them that imperial favor depends on their union, and they reject facts and arguments like people fascinated."

His Eminence remained silent in deep thought.

"Andrea is fascinated and desperate," he said after a time. "The lady is not blind to her ideals, if I have read her character rightly, but she has been worked upon. I shall break up the Emperor's plans in their regard, but in so doing I fear for poor Andrea. He is as proud as you are, Corona. When he finds that his imperial idol has tricked him, lied to him, and trapped him, put him in a false position, made him a traitor to his family and his traditions, what will he do? Despair changes men into lunatics. Finding himself fitted by folly and treason to associate with the mob of leaders which Napoleon has gathered about him, he may continue in folly and despair. So I am afraid to do much myself, and I rely upon you."

"What I can do I will do," said Corona, terrified at the picture.

"I shall have a message for you to carry down to

Fontainebleau early in the morning. I am not yet certain of its form, but it must be entrusted to you, for delivery must be sure. Be here at my lodging about nine in the morning, with your coach, ready for the trip. I shall tell you what you are to say, and give you what you are to deliver. Till then, my dear child, remember my brother in your prayers. Love travels far, and your prayers alone should save Andrea."

When she had gone the Cardinal remained for some time in thought, very much depressed, until an attendant came in briskly with delight on his face.

"Your Eminence, the King of Westphalia arrived in the city yesterday. He expresses the utmost satisfaction at the request of Your Eminence, and begs that you will come to his residence as soon as convenient."

"You will accompany me," said Consalvi trembling with secret joy. He had his finger on the spring which would wreck all plans to marry Andrea to the lady from Baltimore.

The scheme of the Emperor needed no expert to analyze it. The road to Fontainebleau was no clearer. The young Marquis and the brilliant American girl were utterly wearied with their role of martyrs, which brought them nothing but obscurity and danger; the woman held to her ideal until a clever monarch showed her that it did not exist; Andrea had lost faith in his brother and had never lost faith in the star of Napoleon; the two were now floating in the Napoleonic ether, which seemed to be like heaven in its beauty and eternity; and it was easy for the arch villain to

let them convince themselves that the bird in the hand is always worth a flock in the bush. Consalvi knew that his brother would not turn back from the road which he had taken; even if convinced of the Emperor's deception, and of the coming disasters for the Bonapartes, he would in his despair hold to his course. It was necessary therefore to reach the woman, who did not suffer from inflexibility in a bad cause. Doubtless she too had surrendered to a point where change might be very difficult. At this moment, fascinated by the glory of her present and future, she might have decided to accept of her own accord a divorce from Jerome, who became more hopeless every day. Therefore a mere warning would affect her no more than Andrea. Hence the Cardinal turned to King Jerome to save the day, for a word from him would turn Madame Patterson into steel against the blandishments of Napoleon and the court. He had planned this visit on his way up from Rheims, and by good luck King Jerome was within speaking distance, had just arrived, knew nothing of his brother's schemes, and might be moved to utter the magic word which would free the flies from the golden web. The Cardinal trembled as the carriage rolled along, at thought of the stake for which he had to play: the happiness, the life, perhaps the salvation of his brother. He had borne so much in his diplomatic career, there was such steel in his composition, that nervousness had forgotten him; but now grief had seized him in a way that astonished him. He loved his brother, but he had accustomed himself to do without such comforts, to dispense with them without complaint, and thus to escape suffering.

The sudden exit of Andrea from his service to that of the Emperor had almost broken him. He missed him day and night, even in his dreams, his heart ached with emptiness, and then there came the tragedy of the separation, the calamity of this marriage, to intensify his grief. Andrea was dead to him, dead to honor, to religion, and bound to a dead future; for without doubt the coming summer would see the fall of Napoleon into helplessness and ignominy, and in the crash of the colossus ten thousand careers like Andrea's would perish. Oh, he must save him, he must save him! King Jerome must be won to this good service!

It would be an easy task, because prosperity had turned the King of Westphalia into something of a fool. He thought himself a diplomat, a general, a ruler, and a wit, and was angry and quarrelsome with Napoleon for not giving him an army and a greater share in the imperial counsels. He was soon to be nothing at all, destined to shine in history as Betty's faithless husband and the scorned tool of his brother. He despised churchmen, even his uncle Cardinal Fesch, and in particular this astute statesman who was about to call on him. He knew perfectly why Consalvi came. The minister of Pius VII was to be the next pope and wished to make a friend of the King of Westphalia; a poor creature who had enjoyed only failure as papal minister, and who now bent the back to the Bonapartes because they were crowning him. Consalvi read all these things and more in his face, speech and manner at their first greeting. The Cardinal was a diplomat of the kind which despises no

one, underrates nothing; he neither exulted in success, nor pushed success too far; he accepted defeat calmly, blamed no one but himself, and went into oblivion as moderate as he came out of it; it was therefore small wonder that in time he earned the reputation of first diplomat of Europe. He had to smile at the easy airs of Jerome, and his bad imitation of Napoleon.

"As I live, Consalvi," he cried in a loud, abrupt voice, "you have on the same costume in which I first saw you in 1801, when you came to patch up the now famous Concordat."

"It is most gracious in your majesty to remember me so long. This costume is a compromise, and enables me to visit places where the robes might be misinterpreted."

Consalvi wore the beautiful citizen's dress of his office, black velvet coat, vest and knee-breeches, red silk stockings and red collar. Jerome vaguely resented the feeling that even a king looked watery beside the stern magnificence of Consalvi.

"I know what you come for," continued Jerome, "and I shall be happy to add my word in your behalf, but really if I am to use my influence you should hear my suggestions and adopt such as fit. The entire course of the Pope towards our house has been unfortunate. The next pope should learn a lesson by it. Of course there can be no doubt about you, unless you permit the silly traditions which seem to direct the policy of the papal court to dominate you. Break away from them, as I have broken away from the old traditions. And, oh, by the way, at our last meeting, which was at your house in Paris a few years ago, I met the lady who

foolishly married me in Baltimore. Have you seen her since?"

"Only a few weeks ago," said His Eminence smoothly, "she visited me at Rheims. At present the Emperor has given her a residence at Fontainebleau, and is about to marry her to some foreign nobleman of rank, I believe."

"Before God," shouted Jerome in his astonishment and anger.

"The motive is to get rid of her and her importunities, to attach her to the court, and put an end to scandal."

"And she is willing?"

His Eminence detected the note of disappointment.

"I fancy she has been just ordered to marry. She is tired of her struggle, and it is rumored that the Pope has declared her marriage null and void."

"Of course he has not, as you know," said Jerome thoughtfully.

"She has been told so at all events. Very likely she has made up her mind to accept the situation. And it is a pity. She is a woman in a thousand. Her fidelity to her first love has all the grandeur of an ancient romance. You are a wonderful man, Your Majesty, to have inspired such a passion in such a heart!"

The King took an affectionate, admiring look at himself in the mirror.

"It is a pity," said Jerome, yielding to a feeling which he did not understand. "They are deceiving her, giving her over to some rake who needs the favor of the Emperor. But of course, if the lady herself consents, what can we do?"

"Nothing. You alone could interfere, secretly of course, for your word thrills her whole nature as no other power on earth. If you said to her, through a messenger, be faithful, not all the power of Napoleon could induce her to desert her standard. She deserves encouragement. That love of the lover, the wife and the mother, has never met any return since you parted from her. If Your Majesty said: I disapprove, remain free, cherish your exalted devotion to me and my son, the hills would fail before she would."

"And I shall say it," the King said firmly, taking a beautiful pose. "It must be done through a messenger, because Napoleon would resent severely my interference. I do not care if he knows it, but just now we have trouble enough brewing. It will be an easy matter to send her a message by a trusty person?"

"I shall be glad to send the messenger myself, in such a way as to impress her with the sincerity of your request," replied Consalvi. "I believe she told me that in your last interview you promised her help whenever she asked it direct, or something to that effect."

"I remember that Fouché was listening, and all my words were meant for his ear, but the last sentence was intended for her alone, to give her comfort, poor woman, for she was utterly crushed by my apparent harshness. I forget what I said, but it saved a scene."

"She has repeated it often since, Sire."

"What shall I say?" asked Jerome, as he took pen and paper.

"What your heart prompts, Sire. She is the mother of your son."

A moisture gathered in the dark eyes of the young

monarch, and then he began to write with a frown on his brow. The folded missive he gave to the Cardinal.

"I trust this to you, Cardinal, and look to see this marriage frustrated," he said grandly and yet with feeling. "And now to your own business."

It was not difficult for His Eminence to discuss the situation of the Church with Jerome, who knew as much about the subject as about the raising of ducks. Again and again he returned to the marriage of Betty, which enabled Consalvi to make a suggestion without alarming him.

"It may not be amiss for Your Majesty to appear on the scene a little later, and strengthen by your mere presence the wonderful determination of this American girl. If harsh means should be tried some powerful personage should protect her from official misusage."

"I thank you for the suggestion and your interest," said the King.

The next morning Corona, more haggard than ever, drove up in her coach. His Eminence greeted her with smiles and placed the King's missive in her hands.

"Here are your instructions," said he. "Tell both Andrea and the lady from me that the marriage of King Jerome and Madame Patterson stands forever. Deal at length with the lady and discover the most obstinate point in her defence, explanation, or determination. When you have made sure of it, hand her this note. I do not tell you the contents, except that it is from King Jerome. Corona, at least the disgrace

is saved us. May God direct the poor boy into the right channel, and give him back to us.”

Corona understood and her heart became light, her face radiant, as she pressed the letter to her bosom. In truth Andrea was saved! Oh, wonderful man, this Consalvi, who at a glance saw the one way out of a wretched tangle, and by strengthening Betty’s will brought to nothing in an instant the imperial schemes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GOLDEN WEB IS BROKEN.

As an illustration of the ways of a dubious diplomat in given circumstances Monsignor Franchi's delivery of the Cardinal's message will serve. He belonged to that class which firmly believes that the success of to-day will be the success of to-morrow; seeing no clouds on the Bonaparte horizon he had not the slightest desire to serve Consalvi at the expense of the Emperor. Napoleon had planned to marry Madame Patterson to Andrea Consalvi, and no interference of his should upset the plan. In a casual way he found himself chatting with the gallant favorite, who did not hesitate to ask if the Monsignor had met the Cardinal upon his arrival in Paris.

"I had a long talk with him," replied Monsignor brightly, as if the conversation roused a delightful memory. "He was in good spirits over his return to the councils of the Pope, and will be in Fontainebleau next week. It is quite possible that this generous action of the Emperor, in bringing the Sacred College together, will soften the asperities of His Eminence, and other Eminences."

"I trust so," said the Marquis, "but I doubt it, especially with regard to my brother."

"I described to him your favor with the Emperor and Empress, and the happy future marked out for you. He had heard of the matter, and wondered if it were true that you were about to wed with Madame Patterson."

Andrea caught his breath and looked keenly at the Monsignor, whose diplomacy had been often described for him by his eminent brother.

"And may I ask, if it be permissible, what his Eminence said about it?"

"He merely remarked that the union was impossible under present circumstances, since no decision had come from the Pope to affect the former decision in favor of the marriage with Jerome. I did not tell him, of course, that many things had been happening since the year began, because it is useless to discuss such affairs with so stubborn a man."

"He does not know then how far the Emperor has prevailed with the Pope in this and similar business?"

"It would be hard to say what he does and does not know. The Emperor actually invited him to your marriage, for he had the intention of bringing about your union with the engaging American, at the time he visited your brother in Rheims."

"He invited him to the marriage!" exclaimed the astonished youth.

"Oh, you need not be astonished, Marquis, at the foresight of His Majesty. He may have carried that scheme in his wonderful head since you first met the lady. It is this foresight which has made Napoleon the master of Europe. Upon it we rely for the continuance of his victories over the intrigues of England.

Without doubt he sees at this moment the precise crown which is to adorn the head of a certain lucky young man, and has probably ordered his jeweler to ornament the tiara of that young man's brother."

Andrea smiled and his eyes lit up with joy. He forgot his brother's description of Monsignor Franchi's diplomacy.

"Oh, such matters," he said carelessly, "should not be mentioned."

"His Eminence laughed at them," replied Monsignor blandly, "and declares that the Bonaparte crowns are already curiosities of history. Nevertheless he will not refuse the tiara at the proper time, and it would be like the audacious Emperor to get from him the ratification of the divorces of Josephine and Jerome. This monarch is truly a monarch, for he balks at no difficulty, and the impossible is made actual by his power."

Then Monsignor went off to chat with others, highly satisfied with his performance; for had he not informed the Marquis of the precise facts? And at the same time had he not done the Emperor a service? And if the conversation had to be repeated, would it not be clear to the Cardinal that his message had been delivered, and to the Emperor—that the Marquis had been strengthened in his loyalty? Moreover, the interests of the Franchis had not been one whit injured by his interference. Surely diplomacy was a great art, and a capable diplomat a friend of the Empire! The Marquis determined that his future consort should give him a fair answer that very day, but Betty would not be seen when he called, for a severe headache had

confined her to her room. He explained her unwillingness to himself in his own way, and won a promise to be received as soon as possible. Meanwhile Corona arrived with the singular letter from King Jerome. The Cardinal had foreseen that she would not deliver the letter in person, would not appear at all in the proceeding, would only make certain that it reached Madame Patterson. The Contessa had fought her fight, delivered herself from anguish, and banished the Marquis from her present thought and her future life. She loved him still, but not as a lover, and future husband. He was, like the beloved dead, only a bitter-sweet memory of the past. Her present service she rendered to save him from a fatal mistake, from future misery, but she would not appear on the scene, or be known to have delivered the letter from the Cardinal and the King. Betty found it on the table at her bedside when she awoke one morning, and knew at the first glance its secret character. She asked no questions and made no stir about it, simply opened it and examined the two folded sheets within. The smaller one was first opened. Her eyes lost sight for a moment before the signature, she became faint, and for some time could not get strength to read. At last she read these lines:

I disapprove of everything at Fontainebleau. Remain free to cherish your exalted devotion to me and my son. Look for succor when I arrive.

Jerome.

Passionately, with tears and sobs, she pressed the beautiful words to her lips and her heart. When

calmness returned she opened eagerly the longer missive signed by the Cardinal.

To Elisabeth Patterson-Bonaparte,

Dear Madame,

The enclosed note may need some explanation. On the occasion of a recent visit to me at Rheims, His Majesty the Emperor surprised me with an invitation to attend the marriage of the Marquis Consalvi with Madame Patterson-Bonaparte, which was to take place at some indefinite time at the palace of Fontainebleau. The terms in which the Emperor expressed his invitation indicated the feeling which at the moment disturbed him. He said, as nearly as I can recall the language now: two weeks hence you will appear at Fontainebleau, to attend the nuptials of the Marquis Consalvi with Madame Patterson, the cast-off mistress of King Jerome. It was a command, but it may have been uttered for mere effect, as a month has passed and the nuptials have not taken place. All that I have heard since leads me to believe that the marriage has been planned and will soon occur. The motives of the Emperor may be guessed from the language of his invitation. He wishes to punish me by marrying my brother to the wife of a living man. He also wishes to rid himself of your importunities, and to attach you to his court, where you can be always cajoled or easily suppressed. And a third motive may be the hope that I shall use my influence to have your lawful marriage declared null, when once my dear and unfortunate brother has fallen into the trap set for him. I know that he has deceived both you and my brother in this matter. He has told you that Pope Pius intends to declare your marriage with Jerome null and void from the beginning, or that he has already so declared. His Holiness has not done so, nor will he do so. Before God you are the wife of

King Jerome, and so you shall remain until death severs the bond. You have been an example of fidelity in the marriage relation to all mankind. I refuse to believe that the wife and mother, who has endured so much in behalf of her rights, will surrender her sufferings, her rights, her dignity, her fidelity, before the threats, the bribes, or the cajolery of the Emperor. I refuse to believe that you will surrender the noble place in history assured to you in exchange for the loftiest position in the tottering court of Bonaparte. Filled with these sentiments I called in person on the King of Westphalia, and described to him the trap into which you had fallen. Unworthy as he is of you, the news fairly stunned him. He could not speak from rage against his imperial brother; he almost wept when I described to him the possible reasons for your reported downfall: how, wearied with the long, vain struggle against a bitter fate, and caught by the trickery of the Emperor in your weakest hour, you had hesitated before bribes fashioned to ensnare even the angels. When I pointed out to him that he alone had the positive duty to protect you from injury, that your love and fidelity, which so honored him, should not be stained by imperial temptations, that your honor and happiness must ever be dear to him, he took the resolution, with a generosity worthy of a king, to interfere in your behalf. He gave me the note which I have enclosed, and with it the promise to appear at Fontainebleau whenever I shall send word. Dear Madame, your history is contained in that simple but powerful utterance of the King. Is it not to be your history to the end? There are no honors in the gift of this Emperor, or of any potentate, worthy to be counted with the virtues which you have presented to the world, the virtues of a faithful wife and loving mother, the constancy of the martyr, the courage of an American. Speedily I shall be at Fontainebleau, to advise and sustain you, if you need advice and sup-

port. Let me repeat: your marriage stands to the end of time: there has been and will be no annulment: and you may hope still that love like yours may find fruition even in this world.

Ercole Consalvi.

It would be difficult to describe the emotions which for hours raged in Betty's soul after many perusals of the two letters; she herself could not understand or arrange them for many years after; but amid the storm one feeling rose clear and dominant, a wild delight at the dramatic interference of the King. He cherished her loyalty and devotion, he rebelled against the imperial effort to cast reproach upon that devotion, he would come in person to her assistance, and while he himself had been faithless to their child he would not permit the Emperor to add to the treason. How she had hungered for this appreciation! It seemed to repay her for all that she had suffered; so she lay for a long time with the missive in her bosom, her eyes closed, her hands folded upon it, revelling in her joy. It was a poor morsel for a famished soul, but the long years of hunger gave it wonderful sweetness. After a little she began to think out the course of events which had brought her this favor, and she saw that Cardinal Consalvi had so presented her case to the King as to arouse in the weak monarch a tiny flame of that love which always slumbered in his heart. Ah, what a difference in men! This diplomat of iron, calm, cold, calculating, farseeing, had not only principle but a heart; he loved his brother, he honored her devotion, he worshipped his own cause; and not all the cajoleries, tricks, bribes, successes, caresses, prisons,

executioners of the Emperor could bend him the breadth of a hair from the right. Napoleon's success had reduced him to nothing in the eyes of the world, yet the invincible mind worked on, and the helpless hand reached out, under the very power of the Emperor, and swept his golden web into the dirt. He was even able to use a King as his broom, and Betty laughed hysterically at her own phrase, which fitted Jerome like his own clothes.

For the first time she saw the golden web in which Napoleon had caught the Marquis and herself. Like flies they had been caught, but because the strands were of gold they had not struggled as fiercely as the flies for freedom. Entranced, duped, flattered, they had tamely surrendered. How the Emperor must have enjoyed the sport. In a moment Betty grew fierce. She would not be laughed at. She would repay him for his trickery: her soul rose in a flame of ecstasy and courage, in which she recognized herself once more, the indomitable Betty, ready to fight the world for her rights, and in particular this Emperor. Ah, she saw now the majestic strength of the right, even in defeat and obscurity, in two of its devotees, the Cardinal and herself. She had faltered once, he had faltered never; and he the weaker, humanly speaking, had rescued her from shame. Oh, she would rather now be Betsy Bonaparte, faithful to her ideals and her cause, true wife of her husband, true mother of her son, than Queen of France and sister to the Pope! All day her thoughts ran on incoherently until Monsignor Franchi called to fulfil his promise to the Cardinal, rather late to be sure, but too early for his

own view of the situation. He complimented Madame Elisabeth on her favor at court, which was not so surprising, however, when one recalled the love of the French court for learning and beauty, and the esteem lavished by the unfortunate Louis XVI on Benjamin Franklin. Very delicately he left out the other illustration, herself. The spirit of mischief seized her.

"Court favor brings responsibilities," she sighed. "In fact I doubt if it may justly be called favor, it comes so high. For the little favor bestowed on me I must marry the Marquis Consalvi."

"And is that such a hardship, Madame?" queried Monsignor amused.

"It is always an embarrassment to have too much of anything. With two husbands living I shall be as confused as the Emperor and King Jerome each with two wives."

"The embarrassment is easily avoided, if you follow the opinion of Cardinal Consalvi, who declares that your first marriage will stand any test, while the second, from the Catholic point of view, will be invalid."

"The Cardinal is naturally prejudiced because his brother will in any case be the sufferer. But I have made up my mind to pay any price the court demands, and to live like it indifferent to consequences."

"Naturally His Eminence will be grieved. He bade me repeat with all the emphasis possible that the Pope has not reversed a former decision—"

"Really, Monsignor," she interrupted severely, "are you trying to break off a match made by the Emperor himself? Must I report to His Majesty that I was about to accept the hand of the Marquis when the genial

Monsignor Franchi convinced me that a marriage with Andrea Consalvi would be null and void?"

"It would be difficult to make my dear master and friend believe that," Monsignor stumbled, and he grew slightly pale. "The marriages formed under his affectionate care have all proved marvelously happy, and yours will be the happiest of all, for no other sentiment than pure love enters into it. The Marquis adores you, the Emperor and Empress speak only in praise of your wit and beauty, and the entire court admires you."

Then having recovered his composure and performed his duty, Monsignor Franchi fled from this dangerous young woman, and from the palace. The incident restored Betty's equilibrium, reminding her of her own precarious position, suddenly become more precarious than ever. The Marquis would soon call for an answer, which she could delay no longer. If she said no, there would be an instant storm with serious consequences; perhaps she might be imprisoned, or sent away secretly, before Jerome arrived; she might even be done away with before help could come. For a time she must dissemble, so as to delay trouble, hold her favorable place, and make a rapid exit at the right moment. The Marquis would not mind deception since he was merely playing the court game for favor, and higher favor, and still higher favor; and if his game were beaten by the interference of the King and the Cardinal he could not lay upon her the blame. When he came at last, tricked out in his daintiest and manliest, her composure had returned, she saw her way clear, and the spirit of mischief had seized her again. She wondered how the Marquis would manage

the situation. In spite of his gallant appearance his face looked a trifle haggard, for only the night before he had caught a long glimpse of that woman who had once filled his heart with her beauty, Corona. The sight of her did not astonish him so much as the flood of feeling which rose in him; he stood like one who looked upon a ghost, trembling in the knees, overcome by sudden, intolerable pain; he looked until his sight grew dim with tears, and when vision returned the lady had vanished; but in his slumbers that night she came and went in the same fashion, and he learned through the bitterness of his heart how deeply he had loved, how hard it is for true love to die. Nevertheless he stood before Betty smiling, with one phrase in his mouth.

"And now my answer! The Emperor expects it, my heart demands it, your position demands it. Speak, dear lady, and your word like magic will transform our lives."

"Have you heard from Monsignor Franchi?" she began.

"Ah, I see that he has been here with you as with me," Andrea interrupted, "with a kind of protest from the Cardinal."

"If what he says is true I am not free, nor you to marry me."

"A scruple of my dear brother, who likes not this marriage. But I leave all to the Emperor, my benefactor, my father and friend. He leaves me free, and I choose you with delight, if you find me worthy. No more speculating, quibbling, hair-splitting. He will set all things right in time. I love you, do you love

me? I will serve you forever, if you say the word."

And with downcast eyes, moist with remembrance, with grief for the poor betrayed Marquis, with a smile for the humors and wiles of a court, Betty gave him her hand and murmured.

"I say the word."

The gallant fellow kissed her hand gently and with a simulation of dashing joy said: "And now to tell the Emperor:" as he left her to herself.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MERRY MARCH MORNING.

BETTY had nothing to do henceforth but wait for the rising tide. A little while she tasted something akin to perfect happiness. The court showered her with compliments and congratulations as with roses, following the example of Emperor and Empress, who heaped her with favors and caresses; Andrea lay at her feet and talked of war and love and glory; while something sang in her heart as in the golden days of her first wooing. A grand ceremony on a quiet scale was arranged for the wedding day, in connection with an important affair of state. Napoleon had beguiled the Pope into accepting another Concordat, which surrendered Rome and accepted Avignon, thus making the Papacy the ally of the Empire. This agreement was to be solemnly signed in the presence of various dignitaries, and then the happy pair were to pledge their vows before Pius VII. Happiness reigned in the palace. Napoleon felt happy in being able to throw the Concordat of Fontainebleau in the face of Europe, and the marriage of the Marquis in the face of the stubborn Cardinal; but he had forgotten his pressing invitation to Consalvi to be present on the occasion. Betty felt more than usually interested in life and benignant towards mankind as two imperial

maids arrayed her in a simple marriage gown, that is, simple for a court of such magnificence. She kept her head to the last moment, feeling certain that something serious was about to happen. If it did not, she knew what she herself had to do: refuse point-blank at the last minute, and ask the Pope if such a marriage could be solemnized under the circumstances.

Towards noon of the blustering March day a small but gorgeous procession filed into one of the less conspicuous salons of the palace. Its members came from various apartments, flowing together at a certain point and moment. The servants went first followed by noble esquires and pages; then the bridal party with their attendants; after them the officers of State bearing the historic documents; then the imperial party preceding Napoleon and his consort; and last of all the Pope with members of his household. It made a pretty scene by its lack of formality. Each group came chatting and laughing, and took the place assigned to it by the master of ceremonies; when the imperial party entered the gentlemen bowed low and the ladies sank to the ground; when the venerable Pontiff appeared the assembly knelt to receive his blessing. He looked feeble, sad and decrepit, while his bishops and cardinals fairly shone with good humor. They saw in the Concordat the end of many troubles and the union of good with bad fortune. The Pope was helped to his seat on the dais by the two sovereigns. The Emperor went over to the bridal pair and pressed their hands. All eyes were fixed on the luckiest two in France, favorites of the highest fortune, and at the same time dowered with a beauty which at that moment shone like the sun.

"I salute you, my little Marquise!" said the Emperor, and Pope Pius looked over with some curiosity on his haggard face. "I wish you, my dear American Amazon, a happy career at court. Your name is now on the civil list for ten thousand a year."

"Thanks, Sire," replied Betty with a smile which really meant that she knew the Empire would never pay it.

"Pardon, Sire," said Fouché then, "but King Jerome has placed to her credit forty thousand."

"Very handsome of the King of Westphalia," said Napoleon. "Well, Madame la Marquise, you may choose between us."

"I choose," and she paused mischievously, "the Emperor."

"Oh, woman, woman! creation's mystery! In heaven's name why do you make such a choice?" cried Napoleon wholly astonished.

"Naturally, Sire, I prefer the protection of the eagle to that of the goose," she answered in a low tone.

The Emperor suppressed a smile and turning about began to address the assembly.

"Your Holiness, this is a day of glory for the Empire, a day of triumph for the Church. May I be forever, as I am at this moment, your loving and dutiful son. Our Holy Father, out of love for the French people, his beloved children, to-day frees himself and the Church from many grave difficulties. With a courage beyond praise he lays aside his temporal power to devote himself entirely to the spiritual interests of his people. He attaches Rome to the Empire, and goes to live in Avignon, under our protection,

where he will be surrounded and sustained by the love and confidence of the people, free to receive his subjects from any part of the world."

A sonorous voice sang out, the voice of Monsignor Franchi,

"Praised be God for this great mercy!"

"Amen!" said everyone with feeling.

"Shall I read the document?" asked Fouché.

"It is unnecessary," said the Pope with a gesture. "I call on you, my children, to witness my declaration that I do this deed with fear and sorrow. I must bear alone the responsibility of being the first to abandon our long dominion over the eternal city. I have had only part of my advisers to counsel me. I am old, ill, and unable to judge properly so tremendous an event. Therefore, with the approval of the Emperor, our dear son, this Concordat is not to be considered final until the Sacred College of cardinals has approved the treaty."

"I shall answer for the cardinals," said Napoleon soothingly. "The Empire applauds your courage."

"It does not seem to cheer the Pope much," Betty whispered to Andrea. "It's only a phrase, that Empire."

The Marquis put his finger on his lip. Then the voice of Monsignor Franchi was heard again in sonorous accents, saying,

"I call the world to witness my hearty sanction of this act."

"Why is *he* so important to-day?" queried Betty, and she began to look at the members of the imperial group. A few were hidden near the dais, but she shrewdly located the Contessa among them.

"She must know," was her comment.

"Through me Austria congratulates Your Holiness," said Marie Louise loudly, and the old Pope looked at her with vague politeness.

"The words of the Emperor and the Empress," he said, "and the well-considered approval of these pious prelates, encourage my resolution."

Napoleon placed the document on the table in front of Pius, saying,

"If it please Your Holiness, we shall now sign the agreement."

Fouché presented a handsome pen, and the Emperor pointed out the exact place to sign. The old man grew paler, he took the pen reluctantly, and remained in thought a full minute, during which embarrassing delay a dreadful silence reigned in the salon, every eye was fastened on him, every attitude as fixed as if in marble. Then the voice of Monsignor Franchi boomed again solemnly and effectively.

"It is the will of God!"

And with one voice, softly and yet with unction, the whole assembly repeated,

"It is the will of God!"

Pius looked about him as if startled and then hastily signed the document.

"It is indeed the will of God," he said, as he sank back in his chair, overpowered with emotion.

The Emperor signed promptly and handed the document to Fouché, then he cast a grateful look at Monsignor Franchi, and gave him a significant nod, finally he turned to the bridal pair.

"It is your turn now, my doves. Come this way."

The Marquis led Betty up to the dais, where the Emperor presented them.

"Your Holiness, here are two dear friends of mine, whom you are to unite in marriage on this occasion: the Marquis Consalvi and his bride."

"The brother of my faithful minister and dear friend," said Pius, as Andrea knelt and kissed his hands. Tears slowly coursed down his cheeks, for he knew if Consalvi had been with him the humiliation of this day would never have sullied his name. He pressed Andrea's head between his hands. All were so busy watching the scene that only the attendants saw the stately figure of Cardinal Consalvi, in his robes of state, approach the door and stand there gazing on the group around the Pope. He walked to the dais as an esquire shouted his name.

"His Eminence, the Cardinal Consalvi."

He bowed to the sovereigns profoundly and then knelt before the Pontiff. Pius embraced him in silence. Betty succeeded by an effort in keeping a grave face, but the astonishment and alarm of the dignitaries were so patent and amusing that she could hardly keep from laughing outright. Monsignor Franchi smiled a ghastly smile, and the other prelates trembled; the Emperor frowned as he spoke to Fouché hurriedly; the poor Marquis flushed and trembled, but held his ground. When Consalvi rose he addressed the Emperor.

"Your Majesty, I am here by command: to witness the marriage of the Marquis Consalvi with—"

"You are welcome, Consalvi," Napoleon interrupted, "altho I had given up the hope of having you present."

"I regret very much the necessity of protesting against this marriage," said the Cardinal with a wave of his hand towards the bridal pair. "As a Catholic the Marquis cannot wed with the lady, whose marriage with Jerome Bonaparte has been pronounced valid by the Pope."

"His Holiness shall decide between us later," said the Emperor.

"Holy Father," said Consalvi, turning to the Pope, "may I ask you to tell this assembly whether you have annulled the marriage of King Jerome with the lady from Baltimore."

"Why bring up the old question?" the Pope answered with some asperity. "Have we not enough difficulties without it?"

"This is the lady," said Consalvi, pointing to the bride.

It was a most awkward moment. In the dead silence Betty saw the Marquis pale to the pallor of death, and became pale herself from sympathy, and also from dread of what might happen. The Pope understood on the instant and rose.

"That marriage stands," he said, and to the Empress, "I am quite fatigued and must retire, if you will permit me."

"By all means," said the Emperor, glad of the interruption. "The Empress will conduct the Holy Father to his apartments. Marquis, go with them. Your marriage is delayed only for an hour. Consalvi, oblige me by reading this document."

He thrust the just-signed treaty into the Cardinal's hands, and while the diplomat was calmly reading it

the master of ceremonies hurried the guests and councillors from the salon. It was a shabby exit, the courtiers were frightened and mortified, and each fled to his own quarters in order to escape even seeming connection with such a scene. The Emperor and Fouché watched the Cardinal's expression as he read.

"What do you think of it?" said Napoleon harshly. "It stirs you, does it not? That document goes at once to every court in Europe, the first gun of the campaign. You are now free to remain with His Holiness and advise him, but at Avignon. You are free to scheme and plot to your heart's content, but also at Avignon. You are free to bless and curse, pray and blaspheme, but at Avignon. Free to live your mean life, dream your mean dreams, and die your mean death, all at Avignon. I once told you that you would yet be pope at Avignon, but I retract that prophecy for another. You will be shot there."

"Sire, you might add the name of my executioner," replied Consalvi with equal rage and insolence.

"Ah, you think I am ruined, I see. Well you shall read the news of the campaign—in Avignon."

"Russia has killed that scheme as well as many others," replied the Cardinal boldly. "I have a certainty that we shall read the account of your triumph in Rome, and whatever the outcome may be you have made it clear that henceforth the Pope is to be treated as your ally, not as your prisoner or your subject."

Fouché cast a quick glance at Napoleon, who understood the hint and accepted it. Both regarded the last words of the Cardinal as an olive branch for a bitter

occasion, for the words could mean that Consalvi himself might be that ally, if he succeeded to the tiara.

"I shall not defend my policy towards the Pope, and you may draw your own inferences," Napoleon replied haughtily. "Come, Fouché, let us go. These priests weary me."

The Cardinal was left alone in the salon, which attendants began to put in order with slight regard for his presence. An official in the corridor volunteered to show him to his apartments, and there he found the Contessa waiting for him in the audience-chamber of the papal suite.

"Ah, my child, you witnessed this painful scene? Who would have believed it? you least of all, for you have always defended this Emperor against the evidence of your own senses. Now you understand him, do you not? He would have married the boy who adores him to the cast-off mistress of his brother—these are his own words. You have served him, and he would do you the same wrong, if his schemes demanded. But I have not thanked you for your good service. At least Andrea is saved for the moment."

"He will be here in a moment, I think," said the Contessa. "Be gentle with him. What mortification he suffered, and what disappointment! He will demand an explanation. He will be in a rage, and ready to do anything rash. If you are gentle with him in this crisis, he may return to you, and give up his plan to accompany the Emperor to the war."

"I shall be gentle, for how could I be otherwise with him? It is he that will be harsh, for I have destroyed at one blow his false future, hurt his conceit,

and prejudiced his favor with the court. I saw his face. It was terrible. Perhaps it would be better to avoid seeing him until the storm is over."

They had no time to discuss the matter, for the papal page entered with the announcement that the Marquis Consalvi and Madame Elisabeth humbly requested an immediate audience with His Eminence. The Contessa hastened away, Consalvi laid aside his state attire, and presently admitted the two unfortunates into his study. Betty had enjoyed the morning immensely, but the rage and grief of the Marquis had subdued her spirit, and turned joy into pity and sympathy. She went willingly with him to this painful interview, in the hope of seeing him calmed, and of hearing more about the circumstances which had led up to this catastrophe. The two brothers met like strangers, and Andrea spoke at once in a voice of suppressed fury.

"Your Eminence must explain the insult put upon my wife."

"Your wife!"

"My wife. Promised before God, before the Pope, and now before you."

"Vain promises. Her husband still lives. It is for you to explain why you are found about to marry the wife of another man. And also to explain the disgrace inflicted upon an honored name by that uniform."

"It is an honor, not a disgrace."

"To you it is shameful, because it is the sign of your country's woe. It is for you the dress of a slave. Put it off and do penance. Were you not my brother, and your disgrace also mine, I could not deny you the

titles you have earned, which have been already flung at you, of ingrate, traitor and adulterer."

"You misunderstand the situation, Eminence," said Betty, alarmed for the outcome.

"You are well mated, madame, for he betrayed his country and his brother, while you betrayed your cause and your child."

"A second time you insult this lady, and a second time I warn you," said the Marquis, but Betty fell silent, seeing that the Cardinal knew all the wrinkles of the situation.

"I have often seen the baseness of men," he replied to Andrea in a measured tone, every word sounding like the click of a hammer, "but never till now did I taste it. Never did I dream my own blood would know the taint of Judas. Here is the brother I trained from infancy, whose dearest wish was to sleep in the one grave with me: behold him in the service of the Pope's enemy and jailer! An officer of that army which conquered Italy and holds Rome in pawn: of that army which Russia cut to pieces to the last man; sold to a lost master; his virtue and honor, his own flesh and blood, exchanged for a uniform, a useless sword, and the smiles of a woman."

Evidently the Cardinal wished the young man to see what construction an evil world could put on his recent behavior, and the language struck home so hard and apt that Andrea began to choke and to stammer.

"The word of the Emperor," he said, but his brother dismissed the argument with a gesture of contempt.

"Spare me the recital. The Emperor tricked you as he tricked the world; as he tricked the Holy Father

into the surrender of Rome. He schemed to marry you to this woman in order that I might be forced to secure, for your sake, her divorce from King Jerome.

"And she is still the wife of the King?" stammered the youth.

"Until death parts them."

"Thank God!" said Elisabeth, "and Jerome watches over me still."

"For your soul's sake go and do penance," continued the Cardinal. "Tear off that uniform, the sign of your treason and my shame. Humble yourself before God and hope for mercy."

"I will not believe you," said Andrea. "The Emperor told me that the Pope had freed her."

"The Emperor lied to you."

"He declared that the Pope was reconciled to him."

"He lied to you."

"He told me that the highest honors awaited me."

"Again he lied to you, for he has no further honors to bestow. His army and his empire have both been destroyed by Russia."

"I will not believe it," repeated the Marquis with the stubbornness of desperation. "Elisabeth, you know the truth. You gave me rights which you would not have given—"

"I was afraid, like the others, Marquis. I also lied to you."

"Great God!"

He stood there a mere weakling, as the terrible truth of the delusions came upon him. The Cardinal hastened to open a door of escape for him.

"Did you think that you could match this great

trickster in the arts of diplomacy? Are you astonished that an unscrupulous, desperate, beaten ruler should use you as a pawn in the game of empire? Madame Bonaparte knew what he was doing, because she has suffered from him. You might have known it had you believed me. But now that you have seen his tricks exposed, there remains for you the manly necessity of deserting the post of fool which he designed for you. Go to him and tell him that you resign his offices and refuse further favors, that you return to the service of the Pontiff, or anything you please, provided you assert your dignity as a Roman."

"Oh, poor fool! Oh, excellent idiot!" the young man said to himself, as he took in the full meaning of his brother's words. He felt now that they were true, and he saw the dream of the winter fading pitilessly from his life. It was too much to endure, but pride and bitterness strengthened him for the moment.

"Thank you," he said and turned to Betty, who felt deeply for him in his humiliation. "Do you withdraw from our agreement? Remember, I am prepared to do all that the Emperor has marked out for you and me. But if you withdraw—"

"I withdraw," she replied sadly, "but really, Marquis, I was never in it. I accepted the Emperor's plan on the express condition that the reported declaration of the Pope was true. I accepted your offer of marriage because I did not wish to be imprisoned and murdered, and because only a few hours before my husband had bidden me remain true to our marriage bond. I confess that I lied to you. I withdraw from all agreements. I am the wife of Jerome."

The Marquis bowed to the lady and stalked out of the salon.

"Why not argue with him?" said Betty. "If he returns to the Emperor the game will begin over again."

"Poor Andrea," sighed the Cardinal. "He must now wrestle with himself and the spirits of darkness. No one can interfere, with any prospect of success. He is suffering too bitterly. At least his eyes have been opened, and he will not be fooled a second time."

"What will happen next?" said Betty, as she prepared to go.

"For you, nothing. The King will protect you henceforward. I ask you to keep your eyes and ears open for Andrea, and let me know what is going on in his regard. I am afraid of the effect of despair on him. The Emperor may take revenge on him to injure me."

"I think not, Eminence. Napoleon has generous moments, and the Marquis is really a favorite with him, simply because the man loves the Emperor with his whole heart. There are not many in this court that love Napoleon beyond the price of what they can get out of him."

The Cardinal smiled at the wise air of Betty in pronouncing this dictum of experienced observation. He said to himself that the children of the wilderness had in their bones the salt of the earth.

"Wasn't it great?" she went on. "How did you manage to hit the dramatic moment so nicely? And all dressed up in your very best, Eminence."

The Cardinal smiled again.

"King Jerome managed it through an agent," he answered. "On my arrival at the palace I found an order from the Pope requesting my presence at a state function. That required me to dress as I did. I would have preferred another costume and another time, but there was no information to guide me, and no time for delay. I think we have all escaped pretty well."

"With our lives, you mean? Had I been in the Emperor's place I would have ordered you and me to execution. Well, the play is over, and I am beginning to wish I had never left the wilds of Baltimore. However——"

She smiled and made her curtsy, and the Cardinal accompanied her as far as etiquette permitted. He made haste to visit the afflicted Pope; but the affairs of state could not hinder his worriment over the fate of Andrea, and he was not surprised to learn next day that the disappointed young man had departed from Fontainebleau for the army. He had elected to try a military career with the Emperor in the coming campaign, which meant that his pride would not bear the further humiliation of admitting publicly that he had played the fool. It took a long time to learn that Napoleon had treated him with the utmost tenderness, had assured him of a brilliant future, had protested against all the statements of the Cardinal, had declared again the truth of a reconciliation with the Pope, and had renewed his determination to place Consalvi on the papal throne. As the Marquis had really lost confidence in his brother's diplomatic powers and political intelligence, it did not take much

to convince the young man that the future belonged to Napoleon. Moreover after the painful interruption of his marriage ceremony he had not the courage to remain at court. The Emperor kindly sent him to the front with special dispatches, and so the play ended. Corona gathered these details to place before the Cardinal.

"I looked for no other result," he said sadly. "Andrea is too proud. He has not the strength of character to appreciate and follow the only path out of the swamp into which his folly led him. I am thankful the situation is no worse at present. But alas for the future! He is going, not to victory and glory, but to the terrible downfall of the Empire. Few believe it. The man most concerned certainly does not. He thinks that at the worst he can make a compromise. So did the ministers of Louis XVI. So do they all. Men forget the force of events. They think, like poor Andrea, that they are directing the course of the torrent, when they are merely its temporary guides. When they try to stem it, to change it, they are swept away. The Emperor has been a dead force since August. This summer will demonstrate his annihilation. And what will then become of Andrea?"

The tears dimmed his calm eyes, and Corona wept with him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FALL OF MONSIGNOR FRANCHI.

BETTY found in a few days that events move too quickly at a court for minds to dwell on the recent past. Andrea might just as well have faced the situation, at which people laughed for a day and then forgot. After a few commonplaces of grief and sympathy the gay and busy courtiers turned to actual things. In this flippancy there was danger for her. Napoleon might plan to marry her to a more convenient noble, for this ruler seemed to have time and thought for the trifles of his life; even now, in the agony of preparation for a bitter campaign in defence of his empire, he was able and ready to settle such trifling matters as her own. A false step might lead to ruin, even with King Jerome in the distance secretly providing ample protection. Therefore she sought out Corona and besought her advice and guidance. The Franchis had suddenly come into favor again. The Emperor needed every friend he had, particularly at the papal court, where the Cardinals had gathered, the black and the red, and where a sharp contest of opinion had already begun. Monsignor Franchi was required to prevent any action which might prejudice the interests of the Empire, and to keep the imperial ministers informed of important pending measures.

The Contessa resumed her former place of lady-in-waiting, and could associate with Betty daily. The palace buzzed with the doings of statesmen and butterflies, intriguers and lobbyists; and only the apartments of the Pope and his ministers seemed indifferent to the activities of life. Nevertheless thought and scheming were no less busy there than in the Emperor's cabinet. Monsignor Franchi moved between the sections, papal and imperial, like a purple smile incarnate. Everyone seemed to know that he was the important man. The Emperor took him aside for a whispered conference; so did the Empress; so did the ministers; and the solemn cardinals waylaid him, deferred to him, advised him, pleaded with him, besought him. Consalvi chatted with him in an amused way, which few really understood.

"What is the meaning of it all?" said Betty.

"The old story," Corona replied sadly. "Monsignor is needed badly, and given the impossible task to perform. He is happy over it, but at the critical moment the impossibility will be discovered, and then we shall be exiled again. Oh, I am so tired of this court!"

"What is the impossible task?"

"To keep the Pope in order, which means Cardinal Consalvi and his friends, who are bent on something hurtful to the Emperor."

"Quite a task I should say!"

"Yet see how he is doing it."

They had to smile at the smiling distribution of himself made by Monsignor, whom they knew to be but a baby in the hands of a diplomat like Consalvi. No one knew what plans Consalvi held and advocated,

but any scheme would have annoyed Napoleon just then. He wanted quiescence at the papal court. The surrender of Rome and the acceptance of Avignon by Pope Pius did not mean much either in the diplomatic or in the military contents, after the mere announcement of the fact, which showed that the Empire had some influence over the Pope. The withdrawal of the compact on the part of the Pope might have a serious effect on the world, and Monsignor Franchi was instructed to use all arts to prevent the rescinding of the Concordat. Life moved dully among the Cardinals. Neither spies nor intimates could see any activity beyond daily discussions in the presence of the Pope. Monsignor Franchi smiled more sweetly and easily as the days wore on. There was really nothing being done against the peace of the Emperor. Yet the instinct of Betty and Corona discovered what spies and diplomacy could not. They visited the Cardinal as often as possible, and saw things which he did not attempt to conceal. Invariably she asked him,

“When is Jerome coming?”

“Ah, what a place a court would be if every courtier could give the exact hour for events!” he answered. “King Jerome will simply come, and as a result you will simply go, but no one knows when. He is not in favor with the Emperor.”

“May I ask why?”

“He has not been faithful,” replied Consalvi with emphasis. “Having learned the danger in which the Empire stands, he took measures to insure the life of his Westphalian kingdom, measures injurious to the man who made him a king. You see, Madame

Elisabeth, how birds come home to roost. Napoleon taught him infidelity, forced it on him, and now Jerome stands ready to turn the teaching on the teacher. But he will come, because he has regard for the kingly word."

"Still she is afraid of what may happen any moment," said Corona. "If the Emperor should order her to marry someone else for example."

"Tut, tut," said the Cardinal smiling, "there is no difficulty there for this flower of the wilderness. Just hold to the position made for you by the Emperor. You will marry no one but the Marquis Consalvi, and you will wait for him until the divorce is granted from Jerome. You are not to be hawked about from one bidder to another, and you must resent it."

"I took that position," said Betty with feeling, "but I am so dazed and frightened that I have no judgment left."

"It is not to be wondered at," said the Cardinal. "How any of us have kept our reason, let alone our judgment, in the stress of the past five years, tortured as we have been by this maniac ruler, is a marvel. I was just going over my relations with him this morning. They began in 1801, twelve years ago. Yours began a few years later, Madame. What a topsy-turvy he has made of our lives! He has been like a tornado blowing on us and our little industries, and all we could do was to dig into the earth and hang on with our breath gone, our eyes and ears full of vile dust. Thank God, we have lived to see the position reversed, and now he goes to meet the tornado. Hard times are coming, my children, but the

outcome will give us all our breath once more, and a trifle of peace before we die."

"You are always hopeful," the Contessa said with a sly grimace for an utterance which Consalvi had made annually.

"This time I am certain, not merely hopeful," he answered. "And I am heartily sorry for you, Contessa, because our success means the ruin of your brother as a diplomat. I have warned him and he will not be warned. I warn you to be prepared for the thunderbolt, which even now threatens you. If you can persuade the Monsignor to depart on some decent excuse immediately, I would do so."

"It is useless, Eminence, and then . . . I prefer . . . to remain here."

Her voice broke slightly, and Betty remembered that this was the first confession of weakness from the Contessa since the rupture with the Marquis. She wished to be near him when he returned from the campaign. The Cardinal's eyes were moist.

"It will be for the best anyway, my child. To be out of favor with Napoleon a year hence will be fortunate."

The Contessa had too much knowledge of diplomacy, too much of the diplomat in her nature, to be disturbed by Consalvi's solemn utterances.

"How many times he has said the same things in the past ten years," was her comment to Betty.

"The tide has turned just the same, child," said Betty. "I have been watching the rats on this ship for weeks, and I think I recognize their actions. The ship is sinking. Just listen to the remarks on the

Duke of Otranto, my warm admirer, Fouché! Even Talleyrand is not above suspicion. There are awful stories about the army, and the marshals."

"These stories have followed Napoleon all his life since he became great. Then he goes to war, destroys everything, comes home stronger than ever, and the stories begin again, also stronger than ever. But we shall see. What I would like to learn is—"

She paused a moment and Betty expected a blushing reference to Andrea.

"I would like to know what the black cardinals are planning against the Emperor."

"Why didn't you ask? You are a friend of the Cardinal."

The Contessa laughed at her simplicity, and referred her to Monsignor for an explanation. He had fluent reasons for the situation. Oh, but happiness exhaled from him like perfume from a rose. He radiated certainty. His smile conveyed pity and sympathy for the skeptical. The year was bound to repeat other years. The Emperor would go forth beaten on maps, and come back a conqueror of real battles; so well did Consalvi know this that discussion alone would be permitted in the papal cabinet; and as a diplomat Franchi found his task simple and easy, because he had only to warn the injudicious cardinals of the tactics of Consalvi to keep all quiet. He did not convince the ladies, but he quieted them. Yet at that very moment the Cardinal had brought to a successful completion the diplomatic work made necessary by the situation. The Pope had secretly composed a flat rejection of the Concordat of Fon-

tainebleau, and had signed it under the very nose of the spies. The process had taken long, for the letter had to be written by sentences, when a spy was absent, wherever the chance to write offered; so that it took weeks to complete it, copy it, and dispatch it to the cabinets of Europe. For the sake of the Contessa, Consalvi showed it secretly to Betty, explained its contents, and bade her tell Corona the hour when the Emperor would receive it.

"Persuade her and the Monsignor to depart," said he, "for the Emperor will treat them vilely in his rage."

"Will they believe me?" said Betty thoughtfully.

"No, they will not, Madame," and he laughed heartily. "Ah, how shrewd the atmosphere of this court has made you, lady of the wilderness. They will not believe you, because they will think the whole scheme a diplomatic trick, arranged to fool them. However, do your best with them."

When Betty described what she had seen, read and heard to Corona and Monsignor, they looked at each other and smiled.

"What is the meaning of this?" they said, and began to study it.

"The more I see of what they call diplomacy in this country," Betty said to herself, "the more I respect our American sincerity. Such liars are they officially that they can no longer recognize truth at the first glance!"

The Franchis decided that the Cardinal wished to learn first what might be the effect of a revocation of the Concordat on Napoleon. Would the Emperor

order them to execution? It was necessary to inform the Emperor of what was coming, which Monsignor did at an informal afternoon chat in the apartments of the Empress. Corona and Betty were both present, the latter for the first time since her interrupted marriage. Napoleon chuckled her under the chin paternally.

"I am glad to see that your disappointment has not thinned you, or dimmed those sparkling eyes, Elisabeth."

"I still live in hope," she replied, "and I have the sustaining hand of the Emperor. Why should I worry over a brief delay?"

"The campaign will be severe, my child."

"You will watch over him, Sire."

"As far as I can. You still adhere to him? Ah, how could you help it, a lad so fair and honorable. Well, take care of yourself, keep close to the Empress, and be ready to welcome a hero in November."

This speech stood for a command, and assured to Betty a proper place at court for an indefinite period. Monsignor approached with his information, and a smile shaded by only pretended anxiety.

"My dear friend," said the Emperor, putting his arm about the prelate, "I fear you are giving yourself anxiety about this Consalvi faction near the Pope. What they may or may not do is not worth a night's sleep. So why mark your face with the wrinkles of useless care?"

"Experience has taught me," said Monsignor, "that the thunderbolt is usually let loose by infantile hands, very helpless ones at that."

"Very true," replied Napoleon thoughtfully.

"And is not Consalvi the greatest diplomat of his time?"

"A most able man."

"He has undoubtedly formulated a revocation of the recent Concordat, but whether the Pope has signed it, or he is simply using it as a weapon of the future, I have not been able to discover."

"Do not our friends among the most eminent cardinals know whether such a document officially exists?"

"They are quite certain it does not exist, which does not help us in any way, since the Pope can issue it without advice, *proprio motu*, as the phrase goes."

"Then what do you expect?" said Napoleon, seeing that the Monsignor was leading up to some emphatic explanation.

"Nothing," replied Franchi with an air of profundity. "If the Pope had really signed such a document, to be published at once, Consalvi would not show it to a soul until every minister in Europe had an official copy. He did show a document, said to be a revocation of the Concordat. I conclude from his showing it that such a document does not exist."

"The reasoning is sound in Consalvi's case," replied the Emperor. "Why did he show it at all?"

"On the score of friendship, Sire."

"Well, be on your guard, Franchi. I look to you to prevent the accident of a revocation of the Concordat. I want no superfluous troubles at this moment, for our affairs are delicate and sensitive. What would be a slap at other times, now easily becomes a blow."

"You may rely on my devotion, Sire."

"And cleverness," added Napoleon with meaning.

At that moment Talleyrand entered the room and mingled with the group about the Empress. Elisabeth watched him with interest, his sinister character and great ability having made him a common subject of gossip at court. She suspected that the minister was preparing to desert the imperial ship, and it was said that even at this moment he took a pleasure in humiliating Napoleon. Presently the groups so changed that Betty and Corona found themselves close to the Empress, with whom Talleyrand chatted amiably. Napoleon came near and looked at his minister.

"News," he said briefly.

"If you wish to hear it, not of much importance, but unexpected," said Talleyrand.

"Give it to me," said the Emperor calmly.

He read the document which Talleyrand had come himself to deliver as publicly as possible, and rage overcame him so suddenly that he had not time to remind himself of Talleyrand's presence. The trifling audience were given a violent fright when they heard a furious, strident voice calling out,

"Oh, Franchi! Monsignor Franchi! In the name of God, Franchi!"

"It has come," Corona whispered to Betty, and Betty saw her bracing herself for a scene like a brave sailor before a cyclone; her face hardened into icy repose and scorn, the color settled in it firmly, and her manner became calm.

"You were right, as usual," she went on. "The Cardinal did us a service, and here is the document which destroys us."

Monsignor Franchi hastened towards the imperial screamer with a pallid face, and had the papal revocation of the Concordat thrust into his hands by the furious monarch.

"Read, Monsignor Stupidity," he snarled.

"It is genuine," said Monsignor after a careful examination of the wording and signature. His blood returned to his face, and he too put on the icy mask which every true diplomat must have at command. Behind it beat a heart into which despair had entered, but also resignation. He had lost his last and best chance, and henceforth his career must remain ordinary, without great opportunities and crowding honors.

"It is a document which only an angel from heaven could prevent or know of," he said, looking evenly into the Emperor's angry eyes.

"And you are not an angel, Monsignor Stupidity," answered Napoleon.

"Only a human but sincere friend, Your Majesty, whom your imperial ministers honor with long vacations and impossible tasks, declined by luckier diplomats. I ask your permission to retire from court to my home in Rome."

"You have it," said Napoleon savagely, but ashamed of his anger and his abuse of the loyal prelate. Then the Contessa stepped forward.

"I also crave permission to retire with my brother," said she, in her sweet, cool, insolent tones, which so often irritated Betty and now irritated the Emperor.

"You have it, Mademoiselle," he repeated harshly, "but I do not forget your treasonable services to—"

Just then he caught Betty's eye and hesitated, but the audacious creature took up the word.

"To me, Sire," chirped her silvery voice. "Oh, you forget that I explained all about my dear protectress. It was not the Contessa Franchi who aided me, but a lady who on this occasion—"

"Certainly," interrupted the Emperor embarrassed. "I remember. I withdraw my statement. You may go back to Rome, Monsignor and Mademoiselle, and I trust your good intentions will get from Providence what your services to me will not get, reward."

"We have no right to expect it, Sire, from either power," said Corona with such sweet scorn that Betty could have hugged her.

"With your permission, Sire," Talleyrand broke in, at a hint from the Empress, who was much embarrassed by the scene, "I must come to the defence of Monsignor Franchi, as a member of our guild. It is true that we have called on him always to lead the forlorn hope, and because he died on the field we let him lie there forgotten, until the next time we had a forlorn hope. It is not thus you treat such men on the field of battle. In the present case he could no more hinder the Pope from producing this document, than could Your Majesty. It was beyond the powers of diplomacy."

"Very well," said Napoleon pettishly. "I retract my words, and I desire Monsignor Franchi and his sister to remain at court."

The prelate and the Contessa bowed icily but did not accept the olive branch. Napoleon looked at the document again and then tore it into shreds, putting his heel upon the fragments. He left the salon followed

by Talleyrand, and the guests scattered hastily, avoiding the Franchis, who calmly resented anything that smacked of sympathy or condolence. They were done with the Bonapartes. Betty felt the deepest satisfaction with them; as diplomats they had fallen before Consalvi and the impossible; as faithful servants of the Emperor, while deserving crowns, they had received only abuse; as Roman nobles they had saved the transient monarch on his own field, at every point, with finish and dignity. The ladies followed Monsignor straight to the apartments of Consalvi, who evidently expected them.

"I wish to thank you, Eminence," said Monsignor, "for the warning which I rejected, did not believe in, I am now free to say."

"How did the Emperor take it?"

"I have no doubt we shall all be shot to-morrow. Corona and I have obtained permission to retire from court, and we set out for Rome at once."

"I did not think he would take it so badly. Perhaps it is as well that you return to Rome for a little while, and prepare yourself for the new order of things. You will not accept me as a prophet? Well, I shall have my revenge later, when as secretary of state in Rome I shall need the services of him who has the courage to lead a forlorn hope in diplomacy."

Betty laughed, Corona smiled, and Monsignor actually blushed. If he had lost an Emperor's favor he still had the generous Cardinal for a friend, and the future did not appear so utterly blank and hopeless.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LAST HOPE FLED.

A TERRIBLE summer followed the departure of the Emperor for the field of battle. For the first time Betty got an understanding of the trickery human nature can practise on itself when it wishes to be deceived. The best news from the front was dubious with all its victories, supplemented by the arrival of prisoners, announced also in imperial bulletins; the signs of disaster multiplied on all sides; the traitors and renegades became insolent in declaring the doom of the Bonapartes; yet the official and friendly supporters of Napoleon, even the disappointed Franchis, retained their composure and answered insolence with threats. They had heard and seen all this before, and never before had they been so well acquainted with the facts. The Emperor was indeed fighting for his very throne beyond the Rhine, but his bloody path was strewn with victories. They even exulted. Yet imprisoned Betty, with a prejudice in their favor, could see the end hastening on. The Cardinal interpreted for her the signs of the times. One day at the beginning of November he said to her with much gentleness,

“Your King ceased to be a king on the 20th of October. The Emperor suffered a terrible and disas-

trous defeat on that day, and the kingdom of Westphalia disappeared in blood. God still rules the world!"

"I believe so, but in spite of the facts," she said frankly.

"You are not looking at the proper facts then."

"Your side could not help but win," she replied with admiration.

"Thank you. I wish my opponents and critics had your partiality. With them I am considered a rank failure, from that Concordat which I helped into existence in 1801 down to that which I helped to kill last winter. However, I shall have the company of Napoleon this year. Poor genius! I would not be in his shoes for all the greatness of time. His blind side now rules him. Greatest of generals he cannot see that he is beaten flat to the ground like Jerusalem. Talleyrand, Fouché, many of his generals, know it, but he does not. Oh, this human blindness!"

"And where am I blind, if you please?" said she saucily.

"Where you should be, in regard to your husband."

"Am I hoping against hope then? And his kingdom gone?"

"As you should, until the very end of hope. And then you will not despair."

"There is no hope for the Emperor?"

"None. God has rejected him as he rejected Saul, and he will now pass into a helpless obscurity, bound hand and foot, to remain a spectator of the world's ability to get on without him. He placed his mad ambition for universal empire first in his life, and it

has killed all his other opportunities. Jerome rejected you and happiness for a kingdom, and now he has lost you, kingdom and happiness together. Ah, it is only the right that triumphs. In your weakness and obscurity, you will be the strong and successful one. You remained faithful to the right."

"It will be my only reward and happiness on this earth," she said with tears.

"Yes, it means suffering here, from which no one is excused. But to suffer for the right is less painful than grief over useless pleasures which can be enjoyed no more."

The battle of Leipsic did not shake the confidence of the imperialists, but the invasion of France by the Allies did; and then the rats deserted the ship in numbers with much squeaking explanation. The Emperor came and went like a phantom, as curt and imperial as ever, but Betty in the distance saw fawning courtiers grimace behind his back. Her heart bled for him, for her throneless Jerome, now sneered at by his own lackeys in some obscure corner of the world. But before the brave show kept up by the court and the officials of the Empire her drooping spirits could not but revive. The routine of court life went on as usual, even with Blucher knocking at the doors. In January the Pope departed quietly from Fontainebleau with a small retinue, officials said for another prison at Savona, but the Cardinal said for Rome. His five years' captivity was over, and Consalvi remained behind at the command of his master to deal with the Allied Sovereigns when the imprisonment of Napoleon left them free to parcel out Europe once more. Still

the imperialists laughed and sneered and carried their heads high, and still the hope in Betty's heart grew; until that hour when she came face to face with General the Marquis Consalvi, in that very spot where not so long ago he had made love to her. Surprise for the moment paralyzed her, and she did not recover quickly, altho he smiled and took her two hands in his. What had happened to the man? He looked like a weary, exhausted soldier of forty, battered, bronzed, wrinkled, and every inch a soldier; but in his face there was an expression which made her shudder, his eyes looked wild, his attitude had something hopeless about it; even now while he spoke with the gaiety of the courtier. He looked the personification of the Empire in its bedraggled condition.

"Andrea, what has happened to you?" she said ignoring his polite and friendly phrases.

"I forget," he replied, "in seeing how lightly time has laid its finger on you, Madame Elisabeth. It is as if we had not separated an instant."

"And you on the contrary look, not merely as if you had come through a campaign, but just as if you had come through—through—"

"Precisely. Like Dante I have been through hell, but quite foolishly you know, that is, to no purpose."

"You are a general, Andrea?"

"Of a beaten army," he said in a low voice, "of a lost master and a lost cause. And believe me I tried to die often enough, but it was not to be. I live to eat all the bitterness there is in life."

The tears streamed down her face at the despair of his heart so touchingly uttered.

"They say that out of the bitterness sweetness comes, Andrea."

"Not for the fool, Elisabeth, not for the fool."

"And what will you do, Andrea?"

"Follow my fate, of course. I must support this generous but beaten master, who has been kindness itself to me. I cannot be faithless twice."

She winced under these words, the very same which Fouché had used in describing King Jerome.

"God keep you," she said as he went off, "and do not forget that there are two who love you and weep for you."

"If I only could forget!" he replied with a groan.

Truly, the Empire was gone! And with it was going the fortune of young men like the Marquis Consalvi. Would her own vanish in the mists of defeat? Was she not deceiving herself like the imperialists in cherishing hope for the future? For she not only dreamed dreams, but had actually planned an outline of that last interview which chance might give her at any moment with the ex-King. Gossip said openly that the Empress Marie Louise would desert Napoleon at the command of her father and the Allies; and was it not as likely that Queen Caroline would desert Jerome? The deserted, dethroned, helpless monarch would then be free to resume his former life, and they could return to Baltimore, persuaded if not wholly convinced that love and freedom in the wilderness are worth at least the uncertain kingdoms of Europe. In vain the Cardinal pointed out to her the conditions which made her dream impossible; the attachment of Jerome to his new life, with which he had shown him-

self foolishly enraptured; the chance that he would one day be heir to Napoleon's cause; the long hold which the Napoleonic idea and dynasty would maintain on Europe and France; the exciting if ridiculous role of pretenders to a French throne, which would be played profitably by the Bonapartes in turn. These matters Betty could not understand, even while she admitted the knowledge which discovered them to her. Just as his Eminence had said, she would hope to the end of hope, and then not quite despair. Jerome came to Fontainebleau without a thought of her, and was stupefied to encounter her one day in the corridor. He promptly followed her into the nearest apartment, and left his equerry on guard outside the door. She could hardly speak, and knew not what to say or do. The ex-King after the shock felt not a trace of embarrassment. There was but one thing to do, get rid of her on any terms.

"I am astonished, Elisabeth. I did not know you were still here!"

"I am the prisoner of the Emperor yet, Jerome."

"Alas, the Bonapartes hold no more prisoners," he answered with a pose of despair. "I am no longer a king, Napoleon is no longer an emperor. We are utterly lost, lost, lost!"

"If he believes that," Betty thought, as her nerves grew steadier, "there's a chance for good missionary work here."

"I will not believe it until Napoleon is dead," she said with firmness. "Why should you surrender until that moment?"

"He will not believe it and he will not surrender.

Ah, if he had but accepted the terms offered him a few months ago, at least we would have France for a barrier against the last misfortunes. The Allies offered him old France, stripped of its conquests, and he would not accept. Now there remains nothing for us but to die."

"To die, Jerome!"

"I have accepted death for my portion," assuming another pose of resignation to the inevitable. "When my brother signs his abdication, I shall abdicate from life, and assume the kingdom of the grave. I am certain that he will precede me to the world of darkness."

"The Emperor commit suicide!" said she aghast at the mere suggestion.

"Ah, you do not understand, Elisabeth. What, the greatest man of history reduced to the level of a convict, jailed by the Powers for the rest of his life! Do you imagine for a moment that his proud spirit could submit to it? And if he cannot endure it, how can I, even though a smaller man? For I too have sat on a throne!"

He wrung his hands and paced the apartment, and she knew not what to say.

"But why do I talk of these inevitable things in the presence of one who is so used to sorrow that the fall of an empire seems commonplace. I shall perish, but you will live to mingle my name with your prayers. How have you passed this year of terror? Have they treated you well here?"

"I have had a pleasant time of it, but for the sad news from the Rhine every day. I was waiting for you these three months. Jerome, is there no hope?"

"No more than if you stood at my deathbed, Elisabeth. I have made up my mind. I cannot survive our disgrace, or lead a life of humiliation and poverty."

"And Queen Caroline? Has she deserted you as—"

"Deserted me?" and Jerome took another pose, one of horror at the suggestion. "It is rather I who am the deserter. Ah, how fortunate have I been in the two women who have shared my life and my fortune! Caroline is no less faithful than Elisabeth. She will be commanded by the wolves, who have taken possession of Europe again, to give me up, as Napoleon commanded you to give me up, but she will refuse. And so it falls to me to release you both from any obligation to the exile, the pretender, the adventurer, as the jackals will hereafter name me. The grave will protect me at the same time that it frees you from odium."

The tears gathered in his eyes, and he said solemnly, "You see I am no longer a king. I weep!"

Betty was completely disarmed. It had never occurred to her that suicide offered a dramatic exit from trouble to the fallen kings, but now that the thought was presented so touchingly by Jerome she saw its fitness from the pagan point of view. She herself could not have endured the gibes of Baltimore at her ill luck, and had taken exile and other privations in preference. Why should not the eagle and the goose also have their preferences? And all at once she saw Jerome lying stiff and cold before her, prepared for a kingly burial. Her heart turned into water, her precautions against deceit were forgotten.

"You must not die, Jerome," said she loudly, and her voice surprised her.

"What is left for me, Elisabeth?"

"Have you forgotten so soon the wilderness? Its freedom, its happiness? Were we not happy in those days, Jerome?"

He smiled through his tears and took her hands in his.

"How often I have recalled those days in my misfortunes? Ah, if you had but kept me there, Elisabeth, what a different story would be ours. Do not think I reproach you. I am even more to blame, for I could have said, we shall stay, and you would have obeyed me."

"I would not have obeyed you. The madness of the dream was on me, and I would have gone myself alone to France to fight for a crown. Well, I have made my fight, I have had my way, and God has left me nothing for the labor and pain of these ten years. I beg of you, do not add to my misery by suicide."

The merry, fickle eyes of Jerome expressed no such despair, or determination as would lead to self-murder, and Betty might have seen his insincerity had not emotion got the better of her. Jerome retained his pose.

"Death is the only way out of the muddle into which Napoleon has brought us," he said sorrowfully. "Who could endure the scorn of all Europe as an ex-king, a royal vagabond, particularly in our case, for the Bonapartes are the upstarts of royalty?"

"It would not matter in the wilderness."

"I shall never again escape from the destiny of the Bonapartes, even in the remotest desert. I must always be a king. The wilderness would not hide me from

the schemes of our family and its friends and supporters. We are now become pretenders, and we must play the role in spite of ourselves and common sense."

"So the Cardinal said," Betty muttered to herself, and she added in her bold way, "well then, become an American king, cut out a slice of territory on the Pacific and reign there as King of Dreamland."

He forgot his pose long enough to smile, and even fell into good humor over the idea.

"Not a bad scheme," said he, "and not utterly impossible. Your father might act as agent, buy the land from the Indians, make a treaty, and so forth. I could go there incognito. There would be many obstacles, but if they proved insuperable it would still be easy to die."

"It is only too easy to die, always too easy. So death is the refuge of failures and cowards. You must live, if only to prove to the world that you have not failed, and that there is still power in the name of Bonaparte."

"You talk a little wildly," he replied in his kingly tone, which used to bring dismay to fawning courtiers, but it merely nettled Betty who began slowly to come to her senses.

"I shall think the matter over. The wilderness has a new aspect from your suggestion of erecting a kingdom there. There will be plenty of time to consider, and you might broach the affair to your father, and have him examine the extreme western territory. For the present I have only one thing to do: see the Emperor through his troubles and support him to the last. I have no doubt he will kill himself as soon as the

Allies make known their terms. It will be difficult to avoid following his example.

He turned to the window a moment as if to conceal his emotion and then began to move towards the door. Betty stood confused, baffled, helpless.

"Shall I see you again, Jerome? Shall I write to my father?"

"You will see me again, and you must write to your father. I shall place your suggestion of an American kingdom before the family council, and let you know the result. Meanwhile be assured that I shall watch over you, and be ready at any moment to aid you."

He gave her his hand in the manner of royalty, and she was so embarrassed that she made the usual curtsy as she kissed it. He closed the door on her briskly, and got away so swiftly that when she hurried into the corridor he and his equerry had vanished. He had fled. Something small and mean in Jerome made even the tragic in his life squalid and grotesque. Betty found her way to her own apartment, feverish with horror and humiliation. Was this the end? What had they talked of? Suicide, as of the price of onions! The death of the great Emperor, by his own hand, as if Hodge fell out of a window! A kingdom of the wilderness, as if it were a toy to please a child! Her tragedy ending like a mean farce! She beat her hands together, crying out,

"Oh, if I had only killed him!"

CHAPTER XXX.

SOULS IN TORMENT.

THE practical side of Betty's nature, developed by experience and shrewd observation in her troubled career, soon got the better of the mood which her last interview with King Jerome had brought on. Truly her grand tragedy had ended like a farce, but it was none the less a tragedy. She began at once to consider what remained for her to do. Her dream was surely ended. Ah what a wretched, foolish, absurd dream! Its beginning in Baltimore was quite as silly as its ridiculous end in Paris. Everyone had seen its absurdity except herself; her father, Jerome, her friends, both in England and France, the commonest of the common besides, had seen its folly; and she recognized that she resembled Napoleon in this odd blindness, for he could not see his defeat for a whole year after Talleyrand and Fouché and Metternich had seen it. Well, it is something to be like Napoleon, even in his blunders. There was some excuse for *her* blindness. Man is more or less under the domination of the dream. She said to herself that henceforth great care must be taken to avoid the influence of the dream in her life; she must be as cold and cunning as her great Cardinal in studying her future course; which should

now be matter of fact, unsentimental, with a profit-and-loss account like a cheese market.

What then was she to do? Jerome had faded out of her life, less by his own wish and hers than by the revelation of his meanness. He *was* mean! Strange that she had not seen that fault until his crown fell off his weak head! He would undoubtedly adhere to his Wurtemberg Caroline, simply because it gave him a place near the throne, if not on it. The cur! But what was she now to do? Go back to Baltimore? Endure the greetings of all the people whose lips would form the phrase: I told you so! but would never dare utter it? She put that terrible alternative out of her sight with rage. Death first! Then she must remain either in England or on the continent, as the deserted wife, and enjoy herself as best she could in a dubious position. Imagine the journals, none too polite nowadays, announcing the arrival in Paris of "the noted grass widow, former wife of the former King of Westphalia." Unendurable! She must therefore live in retirement, which was impossible, or take up with the Marquis Consalvi and become his Marquise, a feasible diversion. The world was going to pieces just then, Napoleon was that very day abdicating in order to become Emperor of Elba, thrones and courts and reputations and fortunes and careers had gone to eternal smash since April came in: why should she not save something from the debris, even by going to smash morally in deserting her cause and accepting defeat? It would be a perfect excuse for remaining in Europe, would give her a sure position, conceal her identity

from the irreverent journals, and shut the mouths of the loquacious. She thought the matter over several days, without prayer; also without asking advice from her friends at court; and came to the conclusion that the practical point of view demanded her speedy marriage to the Marquis.

It was a rude world, she said, and the only way to deal with it was to overcome it with its own weapons. She did not for a moment see that the dream had taken possession of her again with full power. Betty had no fear of the citizens of Baltimore, nor of the journals, nor of gossip; she would have faced and beaten them all in single combat for the mere whim; but she wished to remain in Europe, to enjoy court life, with which she was in love, and no other way offered except marriage with a member of the nobility. She loved Andrea tenderly, as the dearest fellow on earth; not of course as she had loved the fool-king of Westphalia; but still with a love beyond the ordinary. He considered himself still bound to her in honor. She was almost ready to accept his offer, almost but not quite, because while Betty reasoned swiftly and forcibly up to the ultimate, she usually deferred the ultimate until the next day, in order to have a closer look at it over night. On the heels of her resolution came the Marquis Consalvi, a free man, broken-hearted, despairing, all but insane with the facts of his life and the thoughts of his whirling brain. The great Emperor had gone out of his life forever, gone to Elba which he would exchange a year later for the rock of St. Helena. The pressure of his lips still burned on

Andrea's cheek, the clasp of his arms seemed like chains about his body, and the tears fell like rain as he described that parting only a few hours previous.

"Why did he not take you with him?" said Betty.

"He had to choose, of course, and the oldest friends had the preference. Instead of listening to my appeal he gave me a direct command. What do you think? To return to my brother and my own people!"

"Sensible to the last, except in his own affairs," said Betty, with her eye on the right point of view, unsentimental, unswayed by the dream.

"Well, I can't go back to the Cardinal with any decency, can I? My own people are neither numerous nor influential. The Cardinal alone has power and influence. When I left him I left him forever."

"That was not your original intention, if I remember rightly some of our talks here at Fontainebleau," Betty answered cheerfully. "Were you not to demonstrate to him the foolishness of his policy towards Napoleon, and to be of help to him in the hour of his final defeat, when Napoleon would be monarch of the world, or something like that?"

"What a memory you have, Elisabeth! That thought has burned me day and night since terrible Leipsic. I was the fool. Oh, what days after that battle! My dream vanished in blood. I knew from that moment Napoleon was doomed, I was doomed, we were all doomed. Only my brother rose triumphant from that insignificance in which I had so easily and so meanly placed him. I could see his triumph, but I could not see my own miserable end. I have been in a fog ever since."

"You must go back to him," said Betty firmly.

"Let us not discuss it, for I shall never go back," he replied as firmly.

"We must discuss it, and you must go back, Andrea. Now listen well. We have both been fools, haven't we? That's admitted. Well, are we to continue fools? I reckon not. Twice a fool is just a little too much. Now hear reason and American common sense. You left your brother because you were then a fool. You joined Napoleon because you saw a successful career ahead. The world applauded your action. But it was a mistake. You were too late, altho you did very well," and she gazed admiringly on his general's uniform.

"It is of no use and no meaning now," said he sadly.

"But just listen to me a moment," she went on.

"Ah, but you are charming in this mood," and he took her hand. "Keep right on telling me hard things which I can never do."

"You will do just what I advise, Andrea. Let me tell you a secret. Like you I have been long under the malignant influence of a dream. I have shaken it off. I am done with the Bonapartes. I am going to be so sensible from this moment that my father will be ready to take me into partnership. Listen now to reason."

"Ah, if reason always had such a voice, such eyes! Let me take an easier position to drink in this reason and wisdom."

"You will make it absurd if you go on this way," said she with a laugh. "Now we must talk as if in a counting-room with a ton of gold to be counted, and the Emperor outside waiting for the money. Well,

you have made a fool of yourself, and your brother has become greater than ever before. If you had won in this last campaign and he had lost, what would you have done for him?"

"Given him my life."

"Never fear then but he is willing and eager to do as much for you."

"True, for he loves me, me the fool. At the same time can you not see in your wisdom, Minerva, that it is I who may not, can not accept ever again his protection or his benefactions. I deserted him for his enemy. I am a traitor, an unsuccessful traitor. My head should pay the forfeit of my treason. I did not intend treason of course, for my country had ceased to exist. But you see how it is."

"Perfectly, and I can also see how you are, Andrea. You are just the same fool that went to the war, only more so, because you went to the war on the soundest reasons and motives. You accepted honors from the greatest of emperors, you left a dead cause for a live one, and you made a great success at the very start. But you return from the war much more foolish than you went into it, for you are ready to give up on sentimental reasons, when all the practical reasons are in favor of your continuing in glory."

"In glory!" exclaimed Andrea, seizing his head with both hands to express his confusion and despair. "Oh, what a mind woman has, that a man cannot follow her reasonings. I am to continue in glory."

"Is not this glory?" touching his uniform.

"It is."

"Will you ever be ashamed of it?"

"Never!"

"Well, then, listen to me. You joined Napoleon for the soundest of reasons. As a practical person you gave up the sentimental role of an idler in a prison to become an actor in court events. The court failed. You are again an idler. Sentimentally you are a fool and a traitor. Practically you are the brother of the Cardinal Consalvi, first diplomat of his time, prime minister of the reigning Pope, who by the way sat down again on the throne of the Fisherman just as Napoleon bounced off his, the day the Allies entered Paris."

The Marquis threw up his hands with a gesture of comic despair; surely there never was anyone like this adorable woman. She quieted him with a touch of her lovely hand.

"I heard it from the Cardinal," she went on, "and I rejoiced in it, even if I am a Protestant, for this is the Pope who stood by me. Where was I? Oh, yes, you are the brother of the Cardinal, and you are out of a job with no place to go unless back to His Eminence. He stands waiting to receive you, to forgive you, to place you, to do anything for you. Of course you *must* do penance. Now here's the point of view, the dividing of the ways, the influence of the dream or of common sense. You had the sense and the courage to be mean enough to follow Napoleon. There was no sentimentality, no dream in that, I can assure you. Will you not have the sense and the courage to be mean enough to go back to the Cardinal, get a position, do your penance, make him happy, and atone

for your mistakes? In other words, will you drop the dream, the folly, like me, and look at things just as the wise but wicked world does?"

The Marquis looked at her in wonder, for he could make nothing of such reasoning. He understood the point of view, of course, but the annihilation of all sentiment appalled him.

"And then there is Corona," she added mildly.

"She is lost also," said Andrea fiercely, and Betty in rousing that ferocity had landed her fish. He still loved the Contessa, and the old wound had not healed. "She and her brother have lost together, and are no better than I, for if I am a traitor they are spies."

"You never had right information on that matter," said Betty. "But more anon, as the novels say. What do you think of my reasoning?"

"Never heard anything like it, but it reminds me of a more important matter. What about yourself? Where do you stand? What is to become of you?"

Betty began to laugh in order to give herself time to answer that pointed question. She knew why her reasoning had brought it into his mind. If he went back to his brother, there would be no alliance with her.

"I have been studying the position," she answered after a moment. "I have decided to do the sensible and clever thing: to stay right here in Europe and keep out of America until my generation is dead or married. Then I shall go back to a domestic life. Just now I could not endure questions, and endless telling of the downfall of the Emperor."

"Just what I would advise. It means that you

cannot go back any more than I can. Oh, you may protest and throw up your hands, but it means that you cannot go back. The arguments for going back are good, but just the same you are not overcome by them."

"You are a trifle shrewder than you were before you went away," she said gravely. "Yet not as shrewd as you should be. Don't you see the difference? By going back I gain nothing and lose much, while you lose nothing and gain everything."

"Let us split the difference then. You go back and I'll go with you. Our fates are nearly alike, we shall make them entirely so. Come, away to the wilderness," and he rose gaily, took her hand, and made the first step of the minuet westward. Betty might have been stupid and yet not have failed to see that he was acting a part. Beneath his smile lay his despair. She reflected rapidly that his conscience was too much for him, and that in time it might overcome him.

"You are not the man for the wilderness," said she, "even in my company. It would overwhelm you. You were brought up with too tender a conscience."

"And I wish to stifle it, or overcome that excessive tenderness, by getting away from my brother who is responsible for it. Marry me, and let us try the wilderness together."

At least his offer was seriously intended, and Betty for a moment debated over accepting it.

"I refuse the wilderness even with you, Andrea. It must be Europe, and all the honors of a Marquise at court, mind you."

"Is not this the sentimental which you just condemned?"

"No, it is the world's wisdom. I cannot reply to your invitation just now, neither can I refuse it. Now don't take on that sickly look, which says so plainly that two girls have refused you. I shall stand by you, as I am bound to do, having given my word to the late Emperor."

The Marquis pressed her hands to his heart in an excess of gratitude.

"But I have a woman's privilege of attaching a little condition to my favors. If we are to tie our sensible selves together in matrimony, let us first go see the Cardinal."

"Simply impossible!"

"Forget the impossible in the hour that has seen Napoleon fall. Just let us go, that's all. In fact if you consider the affair seriously, you *must* go. It was the last command of your Emperor. I must go also. He is my friend, the noblest and loftiest mind in Europe. I refuse to move a step without his advice and knowledge."

"But do you not see, Elisabeth, that this Cardinal cannot receive me except as a penitent fool, coming to confess his folly and do penance, and to ask to be taken back. I will not do that, and therefore I will not go."

"Nonsense. You can go as the Marquis Consalvi to present your wife and your respects to the head of the clan. All the rest may be ignored. His Eminence will receive you with dignity. He may even suggest a way out of the—the—difficulties of our union."

She spoke with such emphasis that the Marquis

started at the thought implied; she had news or hint of something concerning her affair with King Jerome.

"Oh, then, I must go," he answered gravely, "because he is practically the head of the Church in France, and will be able to deal with such matters."

After leaving her the Marquis considered with what finesse Madame Elisabeth transacted her affairs, and brought about her climaxes. It amazed him to reflect that he had agreed to visit the brother whom he had sworn never again to see, to announce once more his engagement with Elisabeth, and even to ask for a dispensation, if it were possible. Yet in the conversation Betty had pledged her slippery self to nothing in particular, except to remain in Europe and admire His Eminence. He admired her immensely, she seemed so flexible, sensible, good-fellowish, yet feminine, in all her moods and oddities; so unlike the Contessa, who hid her golden heart under the inflexible hauteur of a grand court lady. Poor Corona! Her mere name pierced him with anguish. He had tried to forget her, to exclude her from his thought, to be indifferent to her existence, and had worked hard at the task, until he recognized that this might take years, and that he must endure it as if it were a battle-wound until nature cured it. At least Corona had been saved the misery of marrying a fool through the shameful fault of having been Napoleon's spy. Ah, he could not enshrine her as a faultless divinity in his broken heart. She was a spy and he was a fool. He could see why folly should invade him, but not why disgrace should claim Corona. His thoughts baffled him, while his

emotions tore him. He might be somewhat content, not happy, with the charming Betty, but if conscience had not hindered him, and also some deep regard for his brother's happiness, he would have liked to end everything in the nearest stream. Even death disdained such a fool!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE AMERICAN AT HER BEST.

BETTY reasoned swiftly and logically up to the ultimate, with a determined air, but always halted at that point, to get a look at the ultimate over night. It was the unconscious expression of her naive, bold, wildwood temperament, which she would not have recognized from the most accurate description. She had apparently made up her mind to marry the Marquis, knowing at the same time that such an act would alienate the Cardinal and break the heart of Corona. These two had befriended her beyond all the bounds of ordinary friendship. Therefore she could not do them harm. So her enterprise was really conditioned by the continuance of hard feelings between the Contessa and the Marquis, and by the Cardinal's ability to get her a divorce. She knew that the Contessa would fall into the arms of the Marquis the moment he apologized for his suspicions and foolish charges; that the Cardinal would never move a finger for divorce of any kind; and that His Eminence had only to look at the proud, defiant, soft-hearted Andrea, to have that gentleman fall at his feet. So the Ultimate, studied over night, simply meant that she should surrender her plans, and play the good angel for her suffering friends.

In that case she would have to find another noble to fit into her plans, and therefore she must confide for the moment in either the Duke of Otranto or the Prince of Benevento, who were always ready to help her. However, on one thing she was determined: the Contessa should be humbled into a confession of womanly weakness, and a confession of love, and also a confession of despair, before Betty would lift a finger in her behalf. The steely pride of the Roman aristocrat would not bend or tremble in any presence. Corona would acknowledge no weakness, least of all before this American barbarian, whom she helped but disliked, admired but condemned.

"I shall humble her to the dust," said Betty, and she did, in this pleasant manner. A certain night in April having been chosen for a visit to the Cardinal, the visit which Andrea believed included a declaration of intentions before His Eminence, Betty called in her carriage for Corona and spent a half hour with her discussing recent events. One day could not contain all the tremendous happenings of that eventful time. The Contessa looked very well for a former Bonapartist, now without office, salary, or future, and her income could not have been large. Betty could not understand the serenity of that calm, lovely face, because Betty burned with unsatisfied ambitions, whereas the Contessa had none; she longed to be at home again, in her own circle, far from the mean ways of a court; and resignation sweetened her heart after the first bitterness over Andrea. She knew that the unfortunate Marquis in his despair still hovered about Madame Bonaparte, and was ready to marry her. Like the

Cardinal she relied on the good sense of this extraordinary woman to prevent such a catastrophe.

"I must tell you before we start, for we should start fair you know," said Betty with an air of whimsical distress, "that my life must be settled for good and all to-night. The Marquis Consalvi has renewed his suit for my hand," and she looked at the hand with such complacency that the Contessa had to laugh, but she said not a word. Perfectly composed, at the same time she would make no comments.

"We are to appear before the Cardinal and formally announce some kind of a determination, and I want your advice, Corona, as to the best way to do what we are going to do."

"The best way is not to do it," said Corona icily, "and I do not need to explain to you the reasons for that opinion. You know His Eminence."

"Thank you, I do, but I am not quite certain of the etiquette of this occasion," and she looked at the Contessa like a puzzled child. Corona concealed her amazement, until she reflected that the course of this young woman caused nothing but amazement.

"The etiquette!" she exclaimed, and then proceeded more cautiously. "Why, the etiquette of announcing to a Cardinal that you are to marry his brother, and of asking for his blessing, and his aid I suppose in dissolving your first marriage, has no rules written down in our court ceremonials. I should think you might have the etiquette in your American books."

Betty resisted the temptation to scream, and went on in an embarrassed way,

"But that is not why I am visiting the Cardinal

this evening, Corona. If the Marquis wishes to marry me, I am not bound to accept him, am I? You know how difficult he is to deal with just now. He is much more of a fool than he was a year ago. His pride and conceit are something awful, and he is just bent on marrying me, for reasons of his own, with which I am not concerned. I accepted his offer conditionally, which was the same as not accepting it at all, because the condition was that he should visit the Cardinal with me, and explain matters. Now when we arrive before His Eminence what are we to do?"

The Contessa looked at her helplessly, unable to understand this current of words, and the expression of this child of the devil, as she often felt like calling her.

"I don't know, except say what you have to say and await consequences," and the ghost of a smile touched her lips at thought of the said consequences.

"I must get a good plan, and I haven't any," Betty went on plaintively. "You see my aim is just to get the Marquis and his brother face to face. One look from the Cardinal will melt his stubborn heart. But at the same time I must inform the two brothers there and then that marriage is out of the question. The Marquis will be furious and may rush off before I can bring about a perfect understanding and reconciliation. You see I wish to leave everything just as I found it here. I can't think of leaving behind any trouble connected with me. Of course I'm not to blame in any way. I have made the situation for to-night, but somehow I can't get the plan to work well

in my mind. I wish you would help me, for you are very wise—in some things.”

While Betty reeled off these remarkable sentences Corona was saying to herself that in very truth she would never understand Betty, or any other American, if the lady from Baltimore fairly represented her people. The poor Contessa had, as it were, with many tears and much sadness, built and graded her peaceful road into the future, and for many days had seen herself walking alone down its bright but mournful avenue. It would always be lonely, always shadowed, for Andrea would be absent, and she would hardly have the right to think of him. She had calmed her grief, put on her masque, kissed her cross, and set forth with steady resolution. And in this instant, a vivacious, sparkling, almost eccentric creature, had undone her work and brought back the rosy visions and dreams and hopes of earlier days. That goodness of heart, clearness of head, and generous will, so often visible and so often obscured in what she had known of Betty's career, were now at work, with daring energy, to rescue Andrea, and return him to his own. The courage and firmness which withstood Napoleon and his court failed before this unexpected display of goodness, this turn of fortune. The tears began to stream down her cheeks, and she could not even speak.

“Ah, weak woman,” said Betty shaking her finger at her, “you love him still!”

“I do,” she answered.

“And you will never be happy without him!”

“Never, only resigned.”

“Then you will fight for him, if there is hope?”

"Only under your leadership, Elisabeth, for you alone seem to have the power, as well as the kind heart, to do such wonders."

Thereupon Betty took her in her arms, and they wept together; and the "grass widow" actually forgot her intention to humble Corona, and her success in the task; for the poor girl had confessed her weakness, her love, and her despair, and also her hope. She became on the moment comprehensible to Betty, who in turn stood revealed forever, by her generosity, to the conventional mind of Corona. For the first time in their acquaintance of six years they got chummy, and exchanged accounts of their own feelings with regard to the ex-King and the Marquis, while repairing in face and dress the ravages of recent emotion.

"Simply go ahead," Corona advised, "and trust to your own feeling and the circumstances in dealing with His Eminence and Andrea."

"I shall rely on you for the critical moments," said Betty, and they drove off to the Cardinal's.

His Eminence was residing in the same apartment where Betty once visited him as the supposed English lady who represented Madame Patterson-Bonaparte; and while the ladies were on their way to him Consalvi sat with the renowned Monsignor Franchi discussing the difficulties of the moment, and preparations for that famous coming Congress of Vienna, which was to heighten his fame, and do so much and at the same so little for the stable peace of Europe after the Napoleonic cyclone. In prosperity the first minister of the reigning Pope was as modest and unassuming as the exile of Rheims. Monsignor Franchi often forgot

in dealing with him his own egregious failures as an imperial diplomat, and, what was much worse, his own bad judgments on Consalvi. He knew what a tribute that forgetfulness was to the kind-hearted diplomat. The fourteen years of his service had turned Consalvi's hair snow-white, but the serene face showed little trace of the anxieties, the terrible anxieties of his office. In fact the loss of his young brother had bitten more deeply into his soul than the cares of state. These were not of his making, coming either by the providence of God or the mistakes of men; but the flight and the failure of Andrea, upon whose fidelity he would have staked his life, seemed to him due to his own training of the boy rather than to Andrea's natural weakness. And what was bitterer still, Andrea had not the courage and manliness to own his fault and to return to the heart and the home always open to him. He nourished a bitter pride and a colossal conceit, which showed how really small was his nature. Once Consalvi had thought him wonderful, so easily does the heart deceive us. He had prayed for him night and day, accepting estrangement from him if only his spiritual life might escape the pitfalls of time; but no ray of hope had shone on him until this message from Betty that Andrea and she would visit him to-night.

"He is very stubborn," was Monsignor Franchi's comment.

"No, only weak; and if I could once get him within reach of my eye and voice and arms that weakness would hold him. He is softhearted."

"He treated Corona . . . by the way, Eminence,

did you ever discover what he had against Corona so to shame and desert her?"

"He heard that she and you were ordinary hired spies of the late Emperor, and he believed it. Just think of that, he believed it! I myself did not get a chance to laugh the charge away. At the same time I have often thought since, if Corona had been just a shade less remote, a trifle more flexible, you know—they were solemnly engaged—"

"Don't you remember her grandmother, Eminence? The little but lofty Contessa Giorgini? Is she not the old lady once more in the flesh as to her dignity? The poor girl cannot help it. I told her more than once that if she really loved Andrea she should fight for him. Oh, the disdain which the suggestion received."

They laughed together at the thought of that disdain.

"Well, she lost him to that clever Madame Bonaparte," continued Monsignor, "and I doubt very much if she will ever recall him to her side. Don't you think, Eminence, that the American has the right method in the art of courting, or wooing, or whatever you choose to call it?"

"Her methods are beyond me," said Consalvi, "and they have in them the element of surprise always. Wherever she is and whatever she is doing, there may be blunders but there is also life. Corona should have learned from Madame Bonaparte, but I think she despised the teacher. Well, I have hopes to-night in the affair of Andrea. There's the bell which probably

announces the American and perhaps some others. Listen."

The Cardinal opened the door of his little salon and the two prelates stood in a pleased attitude smiling at the chatter going on without. Betty swept in with all the airs of the grand lady, familiar with court and conscious of her own importance.

"I had forgotten," she was saying, "that the Cardinal had taken his old apartments, and had Pierre still with him. As I live even the pictures on the wall. Oh, this wretched world! The ancient, very dead pictures hang here as smug as London merchants, after all these years, while the great ones of the earth have gone either to Elba or to Baltimore. Corona, I am going to sit down and have a good cry."

She sat down, but almost immediately the prelates interfered with the declaration that no more tears would be permitted, only joy at the return of the prodigal, through the disinterestedness of Madame Elisabeth.

"But he isn't at home yet," Betty warned. "He will come in like a walking iceberg to-night, and perhaps go out like a running volcano. What are we to do with such a creature?"

"Just this," said the smiling Cardinal. "He will make his statement coldly, I shall reply as coldly, and you will cut the knot which both of us have tied. Then leave the rest to God."

"Always the simplest way, Eminence, with you," Betty said with her usual admiration. "Corona and I have tried to describe a plan, on our way here, which would move naturally, in a kind of order you see—"

She stopped speaking, because the prelates had looked in surprise at the Contessa, who in spite of her effort began to blush furiously.

"Sister," said the Monsignor severely, "could you so far forget the dignity of the family as to connive at any plan for restoring the affections of the Marquis Consalvi to their proper channel?"

"And what is worse," murmured Betty, "she declared her intentions to fight for the said affections."

"Then Andrea is saved," said the Cardinal with great delight, and they were all looking affectionately at the blushing Contessa when the roving eye of Betty caught sight of the Marquis standing like a monument in the doorway. He came forward immediately with a face of thunder, bowed formally to each in the proper order, and taking Betty's hand said coldly,

"Your Eminence, at the request of this lady and by command of the Emperor, I come here to announce my betrothal to Madame Patterson and our intention to marry right away."

"Provided of course," said Betty with immense dignity, "that my first marriage be declared by the Pope null and void."

"A declaration which will never be made," said Consalvi calmly.

"You did not mention that obstacle yesterday," said the Marquis to Betty.

"It has always been understood," Betty replied pompously. "I shall never take the awkward place of a woman with two husbands. If His Eminence says the first marriage is to stand, be sure the King of France himself cannot have me."

The Franchis had vanished from the scene, the sight of the old apartment, the nearness of Corona, the very presence of his dear brother, had set the Marquis trembling; but the shock of Betty's cold refusal fairly broke down his calmness and resolution. He knew not what to say more, or how to keep up his dignity.

"Then why did we come here?" he asked vacantly.

"To fulfil the command of the Emperor and to satisfy my conscience," Betty replied promptly, and if His Eminence had not been concentrated on Andrea he might have laughed aloud.

"Oh, very well. Then I may say good evening. Will you come, Madame?" Andrea stammered, but Betty shook her head, and he turned to the door. The great Cardinal was standing before him with outstretched arms and pleading face, tears dropping from his eyes. Betty shoved him gently into his brother's embrace.

"You are just fulfilling the last command of your Emperor," said she, and then fled to leave the rest to God. Andrea had surrendered. He did it gracefully, but not with the best feeling, for where conceit and pride go together irritation flourishes; and while he admitted folly and weakness, his mortification over both was intense. A little later the Cardinal reproved him for his conceit.

"Why should you, a little Roman Marquis, make such ado over being tricked by Napoleon, who tricked the Pope, the kings of Europe, the best men of his time in every department, turning rulers into his puppets, and his puppets into rulers? And why are you so attached to your own opinions, if as you say you

are now convinced that you are something of a fool? Why do you still believe that Corona is a paid spy of the Emperor, in spite of her declaration and mine and many others? What is the source of this positiveness but conceit? Is it too much to ask of you, we who love you and suffer with you and through you, that you cease to make us suffer, that you give us the delight and the ease of your presence and the ease of certainty as to your fate? You must now make atonement for the past, generous atonement. Go at once to Corona, whose declaration you heard to-night, and by a life of love and devotion make up for the misery of the past years. Be speedy and be thorough as before you have been determined. And above all let this episode be forgotten as quickly as possible. For you have sinned like a child, and like a child you must do penance, lovingly and gracefully, without thought as it were."

"Now command me," said His Eminence to Betty, while the lovers were coming to an understanding elsewhere, "and let your request be made in the presence of Monsignor Franchi, who will be a distinguished witness. You have worked a miracle to-night. I wish that I could give you another in return. But what I can do to repay in some small part this great service and great happiness, if you request it, I shall be glad to do."

"What can I ask?" she replied archly. "I want only the impossible. What might I ask?"

She ruminated a little, standing in the center of the salon with the two prelates smiling upon her. Their

glances said to each other: it will be something utterly American!

“Ah!” and her smile became ravishing in its joy. “Do you know, Eminence, I had forgotten the one to whom I am greatly indebted for my start in life, in this court life, I mean. Dear Archbishop Carroll of Baltimore! He married me, you know. And now the whole world knows that he did his work splendidly. Eminence, you must make him a cardinal.”

And with sweet phrases which concealed their astonishment Consalvi first and Franchi next promised their influence in behalf of so great a man.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BENEDICTION.

AFFLICTION subdues most people. It robbed Andrea of his conceit and Corona of her remoteness, and made them more loveable. They were quickly married and went about the business of life in the usual fashion. On the other hand sorrow seemed to make little impression on Consalvi, who stood out like a mountain after every storm, calm and inflexible in every line; while Madame Patterson-Bonaparte, as she now definitely named herself, became more vivacious, more in love with life, the more trouble rained upon her. She enjoyed every moment of the preparations for the Consalvi-Franchi wedding, which of course was very quiet; she missed no feature of the restoration, when Louis XVIII mounted again the Bourbon throne; she had an important place at the funeral obsequies of her patron, the Empress Josephine; and in everything her interest became an enthusiasm which set fire to her neighborhood. But the longest play must end, and no one saw the coming down of the curtain earlier than Betty. She sat as it were in the darkness of the stage, watching the audience file out and the putting away of the scenery. Oh, how bleak! The curtain

would rise again on the wilderness, for she was going home. A little stay in pleasant England, a long sea-voyage, and then for the rest of her life this fading vision and Baltimore! She felt like an actress who bids farewell to the stage, farewell to the kings and nobles, the palaces and gardens, the rare scenes of fairyland; farewell to the dream and its hero, the faithless Jerome; farewell to the Cardinal and his people, the truly sincere hearts of the great play, and above all farewell to herself, the queen of the comedy, who for ten years had held the interest of the world! All this came to her suddenly somewhere in July, for she had vaguely nursed the design of marrying and staying among these shining scenes forever. Only vaguely, remember. Temptation with Betty seemed to take a concrete form at once, but the sin never happened. She never asked the aid or advice of Fouché or Talleyrand, and puzzled these tricksters by her judicious behavior. They suspected her, but she never gave them reason. Still she coquetted with the design of marrying a noble, conjured up a few interested old beaux in need of money, and ancient dowagers in the same luck. But the affair never came into the open, and the departure of her friend the Cardinal for Vienna brought her thoughts to an abrupt conclusion. Consalvi felt tremendous gratitude to her, for no man knew better the rarity and excellence of her virtues. His keen and experienced mind had easily detected in her the power of the wilderness, and set him speculating on that empire of the West which must soon react powerfully on the old world!

Was she a symbol of that new wilderness? So vivacious and so original, so daring and so witty; foolishly fond of greatness and yet scornful of the great, as divining their human weakness; faithful yet independent, affectionate, yet no slave to the object of her affections; wild, alert, saucy, and distinguished: if she were the symbol, what would her people be in the mighty future? Living on the frontiers, in so vast a country, between great oceans, they must have characteristics like hers, only more savage and brilliant perhaps; and undoubtedly they would become great travellers by land and sea, factors in bringing together more closely the human race. Already the news of steamboats plying their rivers had come to Europe, and men had begun to talk of peaceful revolutions effected by such inventions. Betty's fidelity to her cause and her gratitude to her friends had charmed him. From the faults as well as the virtues of her character he saw that she must always have an ideal, which would keep alive her natural ambition and hold it in the right channel. He said to himself that if he could find that for her, he would have repaid her in some part for her assistance. She came to say good-by to him and Monsignor Franchi on the eve of her departure for England, of theirs for Vienna. He saw at a glance that she had passed through her agony.

"It is like the night before the funeral," she said with dignity, of which she was not over fond. "It does not quite seem that all is over, so long as the body is yet outside the grave. But one waits and waits, with candles all about, and mourning, for the final call."

"You do not look so very funereal," said Monsignor. "The very sight of you, in the latest Parisian style, would extinguish the requiem lights."

Monsignor had at the end of his tongue the light talk of the salon, and she smiled.

"I have made up my mind never to mourn after the event," said she. "As a rule you can't very well mourn before it. My little day is done in Europe. It was very pleasant, and if it only had such a finish as yours is to have—won't you go back to Rome, Eminence, after the Congress at Vienna, and take up your work as before?"

"I have the hope, even the expectation," replied the Cardinal, "but who can count on anything in this world? Napoleon is not so far away. In politics there are reactions. Who knows what is going to be?"

"Why, you really cheer me, Eminence! If Napoleon comes out of his shell as easily as that, why should not I?"

"Why not, unless you were to be put back in it more tightly than before. It is likely that the Emperor will break loose again. Some people will rejoice thereat, because the next time he will be slain or fatally imprisoned. You must not follow his example."

"It is a rare example," said she with fire.

"You should have married Napoleon rather than Jerome," he answered.

"Well, I would neither have deserted him nor died of grief at the wrong moment," and she blushed at his compliment. "Poor Josephine! there was nothing

more for her to do but die. In her place death would have angered me more than abdication or the flight of Marie Louise. However, I am in a similar fix, so I had better say nothing, except good-by."

"Good-by," said Monsignor, who saw that His Eminence wished to talk with her alone. "And in the happy days that are coming, as we hope, we shall look to see you in Italy, where on our own soil the Franchis may have a modest return for your kindness."

"The debt is all on my side, and I hope to pay some of it back in Baltimore. It will be easy for His Eminence to send you as nuncio to Washington, where I shall be glad to make it easy for you in diplomatic circles."

"Now, my child," said the Cardinal, after the Monsignor went out, "you are going back to your wilderness—"

"If I may interrupt you, Eminence, do not forget your promise in regard to my friend, Dr. Carroll."

"It will not be easy to forget," said Consalvi. "But I wish to suggest to you before you go, that you take with you the clear determination to uphold your peculiar position in America with full consciousness of its importance."

"Ah, if you knew Baltimore, or the wilderness, as you may well call it, Your Eminence would not talk of importance. I shall first be compelled to have it out with Dolly Manners, who is still unmarried, and may vent her irritation by reminding me of my failure."

"But you have not failed, my child!"

"To use an old servant's phrase at home, what would you be after calling it then?"

"May I talk at length a little? Thank you. Bear in mind that you have been connected with the Bonaparte family about ten years."

"Precisely eleven this year, Eminence," and she added under her breath, "disconnected is the proper word."

"This period has been remarkable in modern history, highly romantic, and concerned chiefly with Bonaparte. The history written a hundred years hence will be taken up with his career. Two events of that career relate to America, his sale of Louisiana to your government, and the marriage of his brother Jerome to the lady from Baltimore."

"Oh, you are making me realize that I am an historical character," said Betty, waking into sudden good humor.

"A rather important one," and the Cardinal had to laugh heartily. "It may be difficult for you to understand how large your place will be in the Bonaparte gallery. I may not understand it myself, but I am going to acquaint you with what I do foresee. The tragic in history appeals most strongly to a reader's interest. Mary Queen of Scots is a good example, and so is Joan of Arc, for these were the innocent victims of their times. The woman who married Jerome and then had to fight against an Emperor for her marital rights will take rank with these women, not in importance, for her role was different, but in significance."

"How beautiful!" murmured Betty, entranced by the coupling of her name with a famous beauty and a famous saint.

"Did you ever read the story of Queen Katharine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII, Madame Bonaparte?"

"Only a mere hint in Shakspeare's play. He got rid of her neatly, and she was well rid of him."

"She was his lawful wife, and he besought the Pope to declare the marriage null, after it had been in force eighteen years. The Pope on examining the case found the marriage valid, and rather than yield to Henry's determination suffered the loss of the English kingdom to the true faith. That is why you are a Protestant."

"Bless me, how queerly history turns and winds about the earth!"

"Rather than interfere with your marriage the present Pope has endured many trials and insults from Napoleon. In the distant future, when men are writing the history of Napoleon's dealings with the Church, your case will be discussed at length; and thus you will be then, as now, associated with the same people, the King of Westphalia, the Emperor Napoleon, and Pope Pius VII. And it will be recounted with gladness how the Catholic Pope maintained the inviolability and sanctity of the marriage tie, in the case of a Protestant girl, at the expense of much insult and suffering. You now return to your native city, but not the simple girl who left it in 1804. You are a member of the Bonaparte family

and dynasty, and you will take your place in history, in poetry, in oratory, in painting, with Katharine of Aragon. You are not a failure, but a success; not a mere success of the moment like Talleyrand, but a success for all time. And yet you have been just a simple mother and wife, sincere and determined, not a great diplomat, landing safely no matter which side goes down. To your own people your life will be an inspiration, for it breathes the purest fidelity. In the dark days which are coming upon the world—they began with Voltaire—when men forget like Jerome and women betray like Marie Louise, your example will shine like a star in the darkness. We the great ones who steer the earth shall be forgotten, but your name will be mentioned with joy. And therefore I would have you return to your lovely wilderness full of resignation and peace, because you have done well. Live nobly to the end. Train your child to be worthy of his mother and his name. Live securely, for no power can take away from you your glory. This is the truth, and you will live long enough to see part of my prophecy fulfilled. It is the only return which I can make you for your great kindness to me. If I had lost Andrea—”

He paused a moment to recover himself.

“But you saved him, and my heart holds you and him in the same prayer. For this reason alone, if for no other, I would have you go home rejoicing, even in your pain. The little world fades away every generation, but the Church of Christ remains forever. She has defended you, she will praise and defend you

to the end of time. You will be not only the wife of Jerome, according to the eternal law, but you will be the type of the faithful wife, to all decent mankind. So depart, my child, with the thanks of a poor creature like myself, to whom you gave happiness, and with the blessing of God to whom you have done honor."

By this time there was no more concealment for Betty, who laid aside her mask of indifference and gayety and wept like a child. The Cardinal was glad to see the abundant tears, for her flippancy grated on his grave temperament. She listened in awe and wonder to that horoscope which he drew with such feeling, recognizing the vision of the seer, and understanding all at once the position which a simple Baltimore girl was to hold in the great volumes of the world's history. Her natural flippancy fell from her like an old garment, and she went forth from the presence of the Cardinal a changed woman.

"You will come again," was his parting word, "and this time to Rome, where the Marquis and Marquise will entertain you with the story of their reconciliation, and where I shall have the honor of presenting you to a Pope enthroned, not to a Pope in prison. And tell me now," saying this to soothe her increasing grief, and to provoke her witty tongue, "what moment did you enjoy most in this whole escape?"

And through her tears Betty smiling answered:

"The moment when I told the Emperor that I preferred the protection of the eagle to that of the goose."

So Betty took her farewell of the great man, and so she went home across the seas to changed Baltimore, where she lived her life on the lines laid down by Consalvi and died in the grace of God.

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